SANITARY COMMISSION DRAWER 9B AUXILIARIES

71.2009.085.04241

# Civil War Auxiliaries

## Sanitary Commission

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71.2009.085.04241

# LINCOLN LORE

Bulletin of the Lincoln National Life Foundation - - - - - - Dr. Louis A. Warren, Editor,
Published each week by The Lincoln National Life Insurance Company, Fort Wayne, Indiana

Number 488 FORT WAYNE, INDIANA August 15, 1938

## LINCOLN AND THE UNITED STATES SANITARY COMMISSION

In the summer of 1780, the women of Philadelphia were aroused to the needs of the poor American soldiers which could not be met by the Commissary Department of the Army. They organized the Soldiers Relief which contributed much to the comfort of those who fought for our independence.

The Red Cross of the Civil War period was known as the Sanitary Commission. It was officered by those who received no salary for their services and who often paid their own traveling expenses as they moved about from place to place in their work. It was largly directed by the women of the country.

It was claimed that the Commission worked with Five Hands which are designated as follows:

1. "It distributes supplies."
2. "It inspects camps and field hospitals by medical men."
3. "It inspects general hospitals by the same agents."
4. "It organizes special relief with all its agencies, in all its departments."
5. "It keeps an accurate Hospital Directory so that the situation and condition of 500,000 soldiers may be known to their friends throughout the country."

The Sanitary Commission not only worked with five hands but it also earned most of the funds with which to carry on the work. Its chief source of income was Sanitary Fairs which it conducted through the entire North. While fairs as a means of raising money for charity and worthy enterprises was not an innovation, they were highly specialized during the period they were operated by the Commission.

Lincoln was intensely interested in this branch of civilian service and presented many autograph writings to be sold at these fairs. The full extent to which he contributed to the many exhibitions throughout the country will never be known. Just recently the editor of *Lincoln Lore* discovered two instances of Lincoln's generosity which add to Lincolniana two more autograph photographs and an autograph letter not found in the published works.

The Brooklyn Sanitary Fair held in February and March, 1864, published a daily paper called "The Drum-Beat." In the issue for March 5, this notice is carried:

"It appears that the President of the United States has kindly shown an active interest in our Fair. Rev. Mr. Woodruff, of the Hanson Place M. E. Church in this city, during an interview with President Lincoln on Wednesday, obtained an autograph letter to the New England Kitchen, which was handsomely announced yesterday at the dinner-table of the Kitchen, by Mr. Murray, and instantly sold for one hundred dollars to C. H. Mallory, Esq., of Mystic Bridge, Connecticut." This letter presented by Lincoln is printed here for the first time since its early publication in The Drum-Beat:

"Executive Mansion, March 2, 1864.

"To the New-England Kitchen, connected with the Brooklyn Sanitary Fair:

"It is represented to me that my autograph, appended to this note, may somewhat augment, through the means you are so patriotically employing, the contributions for the benefit of our gallant and suffering soldiers, and for such an object I am glad to give it.

"Yours, truly, A. Lincoln."

The Lincoln National Life Foundation has recently come into possession of two autograph photographs of Abraham Lincoln which he presented along with four others to be sold at the Tazewell County Fair in Illinois. This was in October, 1864.

Some of the more important contributions which Lincoln made were the original manuscripts of his most valuable state papers and copies of his Gettysburg Address. The first Sanitary Fair at Chicago was conducted in October and November, 1863, and the committee wrote to the President asking him to send the original draft of the Emancipation Proclamation to be sold. It was purchased by Thomas B. Bryan for $3,000. This copy was burned in the Chicago fire of 1871.

Lincoln received in return for his donation a watch, presented to the donor whose contributions brought in the most money and he replied with this word of thanks.

"Executive Mansion,
"Washington, December 17, 1863.

"My Dear Sir

"I have received from the Sanitary Commission of Chicago, the watch which you placed at their disposal, and I take the liberty of conveying to you my high appreciation of your humanity and generosity, of which I have unexpectedly become the beneficiary.

"I am very truly yours,
"James H. Hoes, Esq. A. Lincoln."

The ladies in charge of the Army Relief Bazaar at Albany, New York, made an overture to Lincoln for his preliminary copy of the Proclamation Emancipation and it too was forwarded and sold to Jerret Smith for $1,100, which sum found its way into the treasury of the United States Sanitary Commission. This copy is preserved by the state of New York.

Several original copies of the Gettysburg Address in Lincoln's own hand were prepared by the President and at least two went to Sanitary Fairs. One went to Mrs. Hamilton Fish, along with Everett's address for the New York Sanitary Fair of March, 1864. Another was placed in an autograph book and it was sold at the Baltimore fair in 1864.

Lincoln had an opportunity to visit the Sanitary Fair in Washington in 1864 and it was one of the few instances where he attended a public gathering during the time he was president. On this occasion he delivered a brief speech which gave his reaction to the fairs as well as his appreciation of the women in America who sponsored the work of the Sanitary Commission.

"In this extraordinary war extraordinary developments have manifested themselves such as have not been seen in former wars; and among these manifestations nothing has been more remarkable than these fairs for the relief of suffering soldiers and their families, and the chief agents in these fairs are the women of America. I am not accustomed to the use of the language of eulogy; I have never studied the art of paying compliments to women; but I must say that if all that has been said by orators and poets since the creation of the world in praise of women were applied to the women of America, it would not do them justice for their conduct during the war. I will close by saying, God bless the women of America."

CHAPTER I

# *Making and Testing the Fifth Wheel*

- 1 -

ON January 9, 1861, the Rev. Dr. Henry Whitney Bellows,* minister of All Souls Church Unitarian in New York, wrote to his son Russell, a student at Harvard: " . . . we can think of nothing else! *Nothing* is interesting but *the papers*, and every night and morning I take them up eagerly and carefully to see whether we have a country or not!" [1] Republican victory in the election of 1860, Southern secession and the formation of a Southern confederacy, Lincoln's inauguration, and the attack on Fort Sumter on April 12, 1861, spelled civil war. The president called for 75,000 troops to quell the rebellion. Emergency demanded participation of all. Swept into action, women formed soldiers' aid societies to cheer the recruit and furnish him comforts and necessities. The first organization of that kind appeared at Bridgeport, Connecticut, on April 15; similar groups sprang up at Lowell and Charlestown, Massachusetts; Cleveland, Ohio, established what became a large and flourishing aid society, on April 19.

This desire to succor soldiers in camp and field held Bellows' attention. Without concert of effort and a clear idea of common goals these devoted women might waste their zeal and produce as much harm as good from their excitement.

* Asterisk after a name means see Biographical Notes, which follow the text.

[1] Bellows MSS. H. W. Bellows to R. Bellows, Jan. 9, 1861, New York.



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As pastor of All Souls Unitarian Church, Bellows discussed the need for giving their enthusiasm a focus. He spoke in ringing tones, and his face and body could express a range of emotion; his manners ever cordial, Bellows represented good-fellowship with a sense of duty.

It was twelve o'clock on April 25, 1861. Bellows stepped out of the vestry, and met Dr. Elisha Harris.* Together they went to the New York Infirmary for Women. Some fifty or sixty women were meeting here to discuss ways and means of helping the soldiers. Bellows was called to the chair, and did most of the talking. He called for a general association of New York City and its neighborhood; he would invite all churches, schools, and aid societies to cooperate in the systematic work of supply. He drew up an address summoning the women of New York to meet at Cooper Institute on April 29; ninety-one of the most influential women signed it. After many conferences he drew up the constitution of what became the Woman's Central Association of Relief, secured a presiding officer and speaker, and arranged the order of business. When the meeting took place, Bellows met no opposition in calling it to order, nominating the committees, and reporting the constitution.

Women from city and country successfully launched the Woman's Central Association of Relief. From the outset it encountered petty jealousies in and around New York. Pride of locality took fright. Why should the little fishes of the sea enter the belly of a whale? The Woman's Central Association also suffered defeat when it tried to establish a connection with the army. At a conference Dr. R. C. Satterlee, military medical purveyor in New York, rebuffed Bellows' proposals. Bellows knew nothing of the ways of thinking in the medical corps and its habit of deprecating civilian help. Dr. Satterlee doubtless believed that the role of the public in giving relief to the army would be negligible. His small-scale experience on the Wisconsin frontier, in Florida, and in the Mexican

War had taught him the unimportance of civilians in succoring troops. Satterlee insisted that errands of mercy would inevitably prove troublesome. Love of novelty had joined with public anxiety to brew a sentimental storm, he thought, but the realities of drudgery and care would dispel their gusty enthusiasm. The best the Medical Bureau could do was to humor a fad and speed it to nothingness.

This conference left Bellows considerably flattened. The Woman's Central Association saved him from dropping the work as a fruitless duplication of government functions. Pressing needs were demanding satisfaction. Questions arose that proved futile; lint, for instance, exercised the public, but experience proved that almost anything was good enough for bandaging. But the possibility that lint might be important made supply organizations seek a satisfactory working basis with the government. Nurses were a more fundamental problem. Their training under Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell had been one of the original objectives of the Woman's Central Association. Would the government receive their nurses? What wages were to be paid them? Who would pay the transportation costs of applicants?

Washington had no answers to these questions. It did not know what supplies would be needed or in what quantity; it made no provision for suitable cooks in the regiments; it neglected the medical inspection of recruits. New York supply organizations joined forces. They chose a joint committee, whose members were Dr. Bellows and Dr. Harris, of the Woman's Central Association of Relief, Dr. W. H. Van Buren, of the Physicians and Surgeons of the New York Hospitals, and Dr. Jacob Harsen, of the Lint and Bandage Association. These four set out for Washington to learn at first hand what could be done. Bellows noted: "I hope I may do some good. At any rate, I shall see *some fun,* and perhaps something that won't be so *funny*; but I apprehend no peril." [2]

[2] Bellows MSS. H. W. Bellows to his sister, May 15, 1861, New York.

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The train of May 15 was the first to leave New York for Washington after the Baltimore riots of April 19, when mobs had stoned Northern troops en route to the capital. (Maryland, though shaken by disloyalty, remained true to the Union.) There was much for the committeemen to talk about. Secession had flown from the grumbling hive of politics along with a horde of Southern drones. Valuable men like Colonel Robert E. Lee were leaving the United States Army to join the Confederacy. Washington was left to the incoming swarm of motley Republicans. Critics complained that the mood of compromise and procrastination made it impossible for the capital to understand the vigor of Northern temper. Greatness had been thrust upon the Republican party, but where was the resolute leadership? Leaders lacked energy and youth. Generals Scott and Wool were over seventy. Men who were anything but young made up the cabinet. Lincoln remained an unknown quantity. Those who knew him said the president was better fitted for crisis than carpers gave him credit for.

The committeemen talked about making war a little more tolerable by safeguarding military health. Citizen soldiery knew nothing about war and its rigors. The recruit's enthusiasm and recklessness revealed the spirit of the time; but personal independence, self-reliance, and ignorance counted as liabilities in a military machine. The recruit became easy prey to disease. The Medical Bureau could not meet the problems of sanitation and hygiene in an army numbering 75,000. Enlisted men traveled miles in cattle cars; they lacked even the crudest accommodations for human comfort; they found no preparations to receive them at their destination. Rations were often unwholesome and distasteful. Shoddy blankets were known to cover beds of rotting straw. The disease rate

was beginning to rise, but the government was helpless to provide adequate precautions.

How could Americans best profit from the example of Crimea? asked the committeemen. The Crimean War (1854–56) disclosed the horrors attending inadequate preparation. Parliamentary investigations and newspaper accounts taught the public that it could not expect soldiers to fight on a defective diet. Doom befell offenders of the laws of health and sanitation. In April, 1856, the British Army had numbered 111,313, in officers and men. At the seat of war the total mortality came to 20,899—2,755 were killed in action; 2,019 died of wounds. Approximately one out of 4.6 lost his life; nearly 5,705 were discharged for disabilities. Losses from disease approached 16,323. Of this mortality 65 per cent took place in the first seven months, from September, 1854, to March, 1855. In July, August, and September, 1854 the death rate was 293 out of every 1,000. At one time more soldiers were in the hospitals than on duty.

Great Britain met disaster with measures of reform. The secretary of state gave broad scope to his instructions to the British Sanitary Commission. The issuance of orders was not enough, he said, for the point was to see them carried out. Few wars had heroes comparable to Florence Nightingale. She and her unit of thirty-eight nurses had established a new kind of war hospital at Balaklava and Scutari. Strict in discipline, Miss Nightingale was famous for cutting red tape and defeating entrenched opposition. The British Sanitary Commission had also produced astonishing results. With the establishment of sanitary operations in Crimea the death rate dropped to 250 out of every 1000 in May, June, July, 1855; by Janury, 1856, only 25 out of every 1000 were lost.

The four committeemen from New York debated plans. Bellows later recalled: "Dr. Harris says that the first idea of a Sanitary Commission, which certainly had not entered my

head when we left New York, was started between us in the cars twixt Philadelphia and Baltimore—in a long and earnest conversation . . ."[3]

Would Americans accept the British model with its sweeping powers? There was the rub. Committeemen thought not; but they knew their countrymen would look kindly on the use of persuasion and moral force to move official mountains. The Crimea had dramatized the problem of sanitation; the public seemed ready to profit from its experiences. The Crimea illuminated other factors, such as military inflexibility, helplessness in the medical corps, and obstacles created by official jealousy.

After some thirteen hours the train reached Washington on May 16. The next day the committee visited Miss Dorothea Dix, superintendent of nurses. She was depressed. The sick lacked nurses and provisions. Her absorption in duty approached total self-sacrifice. Colonel (or Dr.) Wood,* the acting surgeon general, was apathetic. The Medical Bureau seemed unaware of the great crisis. At headquarters General Scott, a corpulent model of military deportment, suggested Dickens' Mr. Turveydrop; for, although he lay on a couch quite unwell, he insisted on greeting the committee, and called two aides to help hoist him to his feet. After courteously hearing them, he promised to issue an order weeding out recruits unfit for duty; but his command was never fully carried out.

Never before had Bellows felt the impact of official Washington. He liked it. The flash of bayonets, sword knots, and gaudy uniforms could not overawe one whose white cravat carried the fame of his respectability. Statesmen considered the committee of first importance; wealth, influence, and fame bowed to let it take precedence. Civilian and military listened respectfully, while Bellows harangued president, cabinet, and generals. Lincoln lacked dignity and the nec-

[3] Bellows MSS. H. W. Bellows to C. J. Stillé, Nov. 15, 1865, New York.

essary presence to assure popular confidence, thought Bellows. His smile sweet, his mind patient, slow and firm, President Lincoln wanted largeness to his thinking. Appearance had caught Bellows in its snares. Secretary of State Seward looked "cunning, not frank, not gentlemanly"; Secretary of War Cameron seemed the most direct and businesslike; Secretary of the Treasury Chase apparently had a mental breadth and positive outlook that set him above his colleagues in morals and manners.

In a second session with Colonel Wood the committee broached the idea of setting up a sanitary commission. At first they tried to form an agreement between the New York organizations and the Medical Bureau; they asked Wood to admit that the bureau needed the intelligent and popular support which only a commission could supply. He knew nothing about this kind of device; there was no precedent for it in America. He refused to countenance this innovation. But that which had made him stubborn had given them drive; the committeemen pressed their demands with vigor.

Bellows composed a letter antedated May 18; it asked for the creation of a body of mixed civilians. Wood sent a supporting letter to Secretary Cameron, calling for a "Commission of Inquiry and Advice in respect of the Sanitary Interests of the United States Forces," on May 22. It would act as an adviser to the government. New York philanthropists and Miss Dix backed the scheme. The *Evening Post* urged its support, and later reported Washington in favor of it. The New York committee was obliged to stay in the capital more than a week. They had clearly worn out their welcome. Officialdom treated them like an ill-fated band of hope; the delays of office seemed never ending. Before the new body could be organized certain officers had to sign an executive order. Committeemen learned to bide their time, while the War Department gave its attention to others.

June 9 brought the reward of patience, when Cameron wrote out the order.

It rested on Lincoln's desk four days later. He showed no eagerness in signing. A novelty like this might become "a fifth wheel to the coach," he said. His skepticism spoke for officialdom. Neither good nor bad could come from this group. Destiny would give it a short life; at the end of its span this commission of inquiry and advice would stand in monumental mockery of well-intentioned philanthropists and silly women. President Lincoln wrote on the order: "I approve the above."

The Medical Bureau now viewed the Sanitary Commission with suspicion. Surgeon General Lawson had died. Dr. Wood stepped aside, and Dr. Clement Alexander Finley,* the next in line according to seniority, assumed leadership. Finley frowned on innovations. What saved the commission was his belief that volunteers would not make good soldiers. He gave approval only after receiving assurance that the commission would confine its activities to them and the navy. So the commission found itself excluded from the small regular army. The navy called on it only when stores were needed on the Mississippi River.

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At their first meeting the commissioners elected Bellows president on June 12, 1861. Presiding over the meetings, he gave unity, method, and practical success to their counsels. Alexander Dallas Bache was chosen vice-president, and George Templeton Strong treasurer. Other members were George Washington Cullum, Alexander Eakins Shiras, Robert Crooke Wood, John Strong Newberry, William Holme Van Buren, Cornelius Rea Agnew, Oliver Wolcott Gibbs, Elisha Harris, Samuel Gridley Howe, Thomas March Clark, Joshua Huntington Wolcott, Mark Skinner, Ezra Butler McCagg,

John Healey Heywood, Theodore S. Bell, Charles Janeway Stillé, Fairman Rogers, and Horace Binney, Jr.* Those who received invitations but did not join the commission were the Hon. Joseph Holt, Dr. Jeffrey Wyman, and R. W. Burnett.

The executive order creating the Sanitary Commission gave no indication of its possibilities. Had its members been literal, the commission would probably have remained a body of inquiry and device. Bellows saw a "majesty" about its development. The commission, he said, moved according to a plan, one "based on the best study, the most devoted analysis of the facts, the most cautious and anxious regard to the laws of human nature." As it strove to do "the most good with the least pain," the commission became "a great governmental department." There was more to do than supplement the unavoidable defects of the Medical Bureau; the commission must also increase and improve the regular supplies and methods of the bureau. So the commission sent agents and stores to about five hundred bloody encounters; it developed relief corps for camp, battlefield, and hospital; it organized not less than seven thousand aid societies and from them drew various stores; it set up lodges where exhausted or convalescent soldiers could find a meal and a night's rest; it placed feeding stations on the route from battlefield to base hospital; it helped the veteran get his back pay; it kept the wounded soldier in touch with his family and friends through its directory; it distributed among the army surgeons medical and surgical monographs on recent advances in medicine.

Yet these were merely the outer show of the commission's work. The majority of men thought its internal machinery a "mystery," because it was "invisible"; few had the patience to understand the implications of Sanitary actions. Bellows said: ". . . all . . . local, state and other efforts of a benevolent sort are . . . mere trifles, ephemeral and inconstant efforts without method or philosophy as compared with our

plan." They despised the Sanitary Commission for its foresight and caution, although their rush to do good often produced confusion and harm. Bellows denied boasting when he said: "Our plans have a breadth and height and depth which no similar military philanthropic undertaking ever had, since the world began." [4]

Only men of highest intelligence could presumably understand the Sanitary Commission, its "scientific basis" and its "profound regard for politico-economic principles on which . . . a humane work must proceed." One of the elect was Frederick Law Olmsted.* Short, slight, and in his late thirties, Olmsted walked with a slight limp. Europe and America already recognized his books on the South prior to the Civil War as classics. Later generations have usually accepted Olmsted as a landscape architect; for his chief concern was the study of landscape and "its potentialities for advancing human morality and happiness." "The Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Big Tree Grove (1865)," his preliminary report to the California legislature, "formulated a philosophic base for the creation of state and national parks." [5]

Throughout the war Olmsted demanded the dissolution of slaveholding as a social foundation. In the spring of 1861 he was "pining" to find his "mission." His training fitted him to manage the Negroes who had fled to Union lines and were caught in a "limbo" between slavery and freedom. As one of the landscape architects of Central Park, Olmsted had helped superintend some fifteen thousand workingmen; but in the summer of 1861 he became secretary general of the Sanitary Commission. Here he performed "his most important single public service," shaping the Sanitary machine and filling it with his drive. Bellows readily admitted that the Sanitary Commission would have died without Olmsted's "power of organization, his influence with his subordinates,

[4] Box 608. H. W. Bellows to R. B. Swain, Oct. 31, 1862, New York.
[5] *Landscape and Architecture*, Vol. XLIII, No. 1, pp. 12–13.

his experience in great undertakings, and his extraordinary powers of concentrated attention."

There were times when Olmsted worked "every night and all night." His letters were often voluminous and not always clear. He confessed:

> I am an exceedingly labored and poor writer. I cannot write what I have thought. Writing is a laborious process of judgment with me. I never know quite what I think until I act, or write action." [6]

Olmsted not battling for his convictions would not have been Olmsted. He refused to compromise with popular prejudice. Philanthropic persons criticized the commission for paying its employees. Olmsted answered with a question: "How long could the war be carried on upon the theory that voluntary and unpaid services are the best or that a patriotic spirit is the best security of discipline?" For the daily performance of Sanitary business he insisted on "getting the best available talent and paying the market price for it." [7]

In theory the commission [8] enjoyed an intimate footing with the government, sharing observations. It chose to work through the Medical Bureau, because the interests of the two groups were identical. The soldier as a fighting unit concerned the bureau; the commission wanted to form a link between the recruit and the rest of the country, and to do the things the bureau could not perform. For both organizations to function properly meant that the one required the confidence of the other. The commission, moreover, stretched the meaning of relief to spare the government any extra burdens. To maintain military efficiency the commission acted

[6] Box 914, Vol. I, letter 268. F. L. Olmsted to J. S. Newberry, Nov. 5, 1862, New York.

[7] Olmsted MSS. F. L. Olmsted to Judge Mark Skinner, Nov. 25, 1862, Washington, D.C.

[8] For a description of the organization see Chapter XIV.

as public distributing agent; it also listened to the questionings of anxious friends and relations of soldiers. To secure greater cooperation Dr. Elisha Harris took care to approach Surgeon General Finley in July, 1861. He failed in his mission. As a person he pleased Finley, but the surgeon general never showed a spark of liking the other commissioners.

The Medical Bureau was averse to the language of sweet reasonableness while contemplating the object of its detestation. Preening and strutting in borrowed feathers, the upstart commission hawked its claims to sanitary light and boasted of cutting red tape! The Medical Bureau would not tolerate questioning or even implied criticism from this singular creature which bore no resemblance to any other governmental agency. It was like the bastard in the royal family; unable to enforce his rights, he must depend on the good will of others. But did the Sanitary Commission have any worth? None, for it could only be a nuisance.

Others before Finley had set the bureau's tone. The bureau had satisfied the peacetime needs of 15,000 men; its personnel largely included a surgeon general and twenty-six surgeons. Many of these were incapacitated, while one-third were unfit for service. To attract young doctors Congress had created the post of assistant surgeon in 1834. Finley apparently did little to change the bureau. Fearing the Sanitary Commission as a mischiefmaker, he did everything to make anxiety a reality. He refused the commission confidential footing, rejecting its counsels and offers of cooperation. The Sanitary Commission could assume no role but that of critic.

The difficulty, thought Bellows, boiled down to Finley's vanity, obstinacy, and conceit, his "conscientious narrowness and well-intentioned weakness." The surgeon general blocked plans that had been based on "the largest European experience, commended by the medical intelligence and the humane feeling of the great centres of knowledge and philanthropy throughout this whole country, and involving the

lives and comforts of so many of our citizen soldiery." Finley was wed to the small scope of his service, clinging to antiquated ideas and procedures; death alone could part him from his love of settled arrangements and prejudice against change. Without medical reputation, the surgeon general was too old to win it, thought the commissioners.

They worked as closely as possible with the medical directors of the various armies. As General McClellan's medical director, Surgeon Charles Stuart Tripler * was important; but he too took an exaggerated pride in the prerogatives and privileges of military position. Both Finley and Tripler seemed to follow the tradition of Sir John Hall and Dr. Menzies, the British medical directors at Crimea. The Sanitary Commission was not the only critic of the bureau; other agencies thought it the most inefficient and ineffective of divisions in the War Department. Neither Finley nor Tripler could strike out alone, but abided by the letter that killed. They failed to understand the Unicorn's advice on cutting Looking-Glass cake: "Hand it round first, and cut it afterwards."

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To the commission the journey between New York and Washington ran on rails of monotony. Changing seasons brought little variety. Winter turned the countryside into a flood of dreariness; summer meant the addition of dust to humidity. The crowded rowdy trip strengthened the commuter's stoicism, for he must endure the constant change from cars to ferryboats and back to cars. Then there was Washington. Crossing the muddy streets in winter coated one's boots and called for a bootblack's "assiduous attentions." Summer swarmed with flies, mosquitoes, crowds, and bad smells.

Sanitary headquarters at the Treasury Building was a large room. It held a long green-covered table and chairs

ranged in order; a neat pile of stationery was set before each place. For George Strong the sight was enough to produce "sensations of dignity and red tapery." The commissioners stayed in these crowded quarters until October, when the government rented them the three-story Adams house at 244 F Street and a storehouse.

At board meetings the commissioners discussed organizational matters, formed general policies, and made decisions. Mrs. Henry Whitney Bellows remembered the first two weeks of Sanitary existence, when the commissioners met day and evening. She wrote: "The business itself is inspiring, but the accessories of battle, camp bed, dyspepsia, crackers . . . canteen men pulling constantly at our door bell belong less to the heroic and more to the irritating and self-seeking and annoying order of things." [9] Frequently some of the commissioners performed special services, but they were never obliged to follow prescribed duties. The commissioners rather looked to others for leadership. For a while their gospel was Olmsted, but long before the end of the war they were leaning on the executive committee.

In the classical lines of the federal buildings loyal Americans found the fullness and promise of grandeur they wished their country to embody. Commissioner Strong especially admired the Capitol's marbles and frescoes, but the paintings in the rotunda and the Mills equestrian statue of Jackson he would have thrown to the Confederacy. To a Marylander like Dr. Lewis Henry Steiner,* Washington was a stupid place. Who and where were its old families? The city mirrored national slovenliness. Olmsted saw the reflection of frontier indifference and the laziness of a slave society. The capital looked down at the heels, and for this Americans paid in loss of prestige abroad. A visitor saw the government

[9] Bellows MSS. Mrs. H. W. Bellows to Russell Bellows, June 23, 1861, New York.

buildings—those symbols of "moral grandeur of a great republic"—from the "unmitigated shabbiness and filth of the unsewered, unpaved, unpoliced streets of a collocation of houses," whose owners were powerless to remedy the evil. The total effect was an offense to good taste, "like precious stones on dirty hands."

What could have been more slipshod than the new Republican president and his Dickensian Congress? The sight of that lanky figure strolling with a couple of "loafers" was too much for Olmsted. Dressed in a cheap suit, Lincoln's person bore no connotations of great office. Olmsted's companion made a joke at the president's expense. Lincoln overheard the quip and "turned and laughed familiarly."

Congress, a group of poor provincial lawyers, developed the fugue of slovenliness. With no sizable practice, these men worked hard at lawmaking; they did nothing thoroughly and showed no signs of vigorous training; they depended on being shrewd, wary, decisive, and always open to anybody and anything. These public servants regarded all business alike. Petty or important, no matter; everything they squeezed helter-skelter into their calendars. Olmsted watched the chairman of an important committee leave his colleagues to talk with a visitor. The chairman spoke with conviction; but, expressing contrary views, the visitor said his own information was better founded. The chairman returned to committee. Five minutes later he rose and presented the visitor's argument as his own carefully reasoned opinion; his was the "official report from opportunities and duties of his chairmanship." Members of lobbies and interested citizens oppressed Congress, thought Olmsted; lawmakers got rid of these beasts of prey by tossing out promises with shameful carelessness. Congressmen lacked breadth of experience. New Englanders were apt to be reserved and silent. New Yorkers were sloppy and of little use to the Sani-

tary Commission; Senator Preston King did not study, but made the most of what he knew. Westerners were generally ill tempered and jealously local. Pennsylvanians were out for special interests. As ignorant as they were self-assured, Congressmen were fitful in discipline and consequently unreliable; their administration was irregular, lax, and feeble.

Olmsted observed: "Nothing was more evident during the whole war than that the members of Congress and most of the popular leaders never trod on any firm ground of conviction about the popular character." Too few of the most responsible officials knew the alphabet of administration. They treated administrative and executive as one and the same. Vague ideas floated in their minds about the "relations of authority and responsibility, of assignments of duty and accountability with reference to given assignments." Was there no "Euclid of Administrative Science"? Was there no axiom that read: "As is the measure of free will, so is the measure of responsibility" and its corollary: "In proportion as free will (authority or discretion) is restrained, responsibility is reduced"? But Americans cared little about fitness for office; they paid almost no attention to men who served ably in minor but important offices.[10]

Uncouth Washington was also a city of ease and informality. Summer band concerts made a difference for an hour and a half on Sunday afternoons. Average men watched the great and near great move among tides of mediocrities. Washington was the worst place in the world for ministers, thought Bellows. Sunday morning found lawmakers stuffing their bellies, when their souls should have been sharing a love feast. "Really the capital seems about the last place for seeing anything in a large way," said Bellows. "Things are

[10] Olmsted MSS. From "Notes on American Civilization," Mariposa, Calif., Private Book 226, F. L. Olmsted to Hurlburt, Jan. 31, 1863, Washington, D.C.

too much under your nose, and I am too busy with my own concerns to attend much to the people or the things which with more leisure I might see and enjoy." [11] Complaints reached the commission that the moral tone of the capital was suffering. Freed from home restraints, the citizen soldier was profane and obscene, swaggering and drunken, truculent and turbulent. Respectability could not pass him without a shudder. Would any good come out of Washington? Olmsted could find no great men, heroes, and philosophers, only the "mysterious strength of the free unenlightened people," to carry the Union through crisis.

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The national government left the problems of raising and equipping troops to the states. State rights made discipline hard to achieve, especially with three-month enlistments. Training was almost impossible; federal supervision began when regiments had filled their quotas and were on the way to camp or firing line. Governors chose regimental and company officers, generally selecting those who would be helpful politically. Green at war, too many officers were self-seekers, their epaulettes covering carelessness and ignorance. They felt superior to *Army Regulations.* This military venture was temporary, they reasoned. Why take the trouble to master information they would never use again? Few officers knew more of their duties than they had learned in the peacetime militia. The captain, "the father of his company," went to the field unpracticed in his duties.

The citizen soldier hated to take orders, while his officer issued them with reluctance. A self-reliant private felt little respect for his superiors, whose extremes of domineering and easy familiarity made for weak discipline. Election of officers

[11] Bellows MSS. H. W. Bellows to R. Bellows, Jan. 12, 1864, Washington, D.C.

to fill vacancies set popularity before ability; the newly chosen captain fresh from village politics still looked like a hayseed to his men. Olmsted sensed an inherent weakness in army structure, but military authorities put off any criticism. Only through painful experience could men be taught, they told Olmsted. The Sanitary Commission soon learned that individual state action led to confusion and waste of energy. To avoid duplication, needless expenditure, and bad hygienic conditions, Sanitary leaders stressed strong central direction.

The human material assembled at Washington ought to make an admirable army, thought the commissioners. "Severely disjointed regiments" camped under canvas. Sanitary inspectors east and west reported stinking sinks, no sewage disposal, imperfect drainage, inadequate tents, bad discipline, no camp police, drunkenness, personal uncleanliness, overcrowding, clothing of bad quality, inadequate diet, and few trained cooks. To the Sanitary Commission these conditions confessed national uncertainty and unpreparedness.

Officialdom expressed interest in the commission, but almost no one gave it serious consideration. Government representatives on the commission gave scarcely five seconds to what demanded five hours' attention; they did little more than obstruct and discourage. Military men ignored Sanitary advice. Since sanitary improvement could only come with stricter discipline, the commission asked for power to enforce its decisions. It went before the Senate military affairs committee with a bill, providing that rations be given Sanitary inspectors stationed in or near camp and requiring officers either to comply with recommendations or assign reasons for not doing so. The president and the secretary of the commission would receive franking privileges. This last was enough to kill the bill, said Strong; but Senators Wilson, King, and Rice expressed such enthusiasm that they wanted to suspend any officer who refused to obey Sanitary commands. The

commissioners protested against this "prerogative of mischiefmaking."

The bill met no opposition on initial passage; but it gave umbrage to military and medical officers, who launched their attack in mid-July, when the commissioners had left Washington and could not counterattack. Senator Wilson now refused to support a bill so offensive to the Medical Bureau. The commissioners set the senator down as a double-dealer. Eventually Olmsted placed him among abolitionist fence-jumpers, and liars, and "infernal gamblers" of armies. Only Samuel Gridley Howe tried to explain his position. Honest and earnest, Wilson was "very impressionable." The bureau had seized on this quality so admirably that he had given up the commission as useless.

Foe and friend stood boldly etched. In this experience President Lincoln and Quartermaster Meigs spoke of the commission with sympathy. On July 21 the commission advised providing comfortable accommodations for incoming and outgoing soldiers near the Washington railroad station, employing competent cooks in the army, issuing large quantities of fresh vegetables, and setting up an allotment system; but the government acted on none of this advice.

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On Arlington Heights, General McDowell commanded some 35,000 men in five divisions. The thought of advancing on Richmond made men overoptimistic, thought Olmsted. Short of ambulances and stores, Surgeons W. S. King, medical director, and Dr. Magruder, his assistant, met problems by improvisation. Lacking power of enforcement, they could not make the surgeon of one state accept casualties from another state.

Federals and Confederates clashed at Manassas or Bull Run on July 21. Surgeons worked in an individual manner,

the results of their toils understandably small. King packed instruments, dressings, and stimulants in his saddlebags, and used them to restrain hemorrhage and relieve exhaustion and suffering. The soldier usually received surgical attention on the spot where the wound was received. Surgeons made hospitals of Sedley Church, nearby houses, and barns. The wounded who failed to find shelter took refuge in groves and ravines.

Union defeat came at five o'clock in the afternoon. Fleeing soldiers, horses, and vehicles jammed the road back to Washington. The panic-stricken swirled past overturned wagons and their spilled contents. Vigorous officers fled on horses or in ambulances, leaving most of the wounded on the field. Caught in the retreat, Dr. King was unable to make provision for them. Union doctors who remained with the wounded were sent to Richmond as prisoners. The Confederacy released them later in 1861, and they returned home. The foe had clashed with one-eighth of the Union Army, and had killed 483. The list of the missing was large. Bull Run proved that an armed mob did not make an army; it showed that the individual exertions of doctors could not make a medical corps.

The commissioners feared for the safety of Washington, while Olmsted wandered through the streets of woe. Men at dawn slept on pavements, doorsteps, and in gutters; there they lay without blankets or overcoats. Those awake clustered together, "pale, grimy, with bloodshot eyes, unshaven, unkempt, sullen, fierce, feverish, weak, and ravenous . . ." They were wearing parts of different uniforms, soiled and dank with dew. No arms, no officers, these men who had been soldiers tore down fences to build fires and boil coffee "in black and battered vessels." Some sat bowed and silent in rows along the curb; others went from house to house begging for food. In striking contrast, the officers had flocked to Willard's Hotel. A few were ragged, dirty, or else drunk.

Occasionally one would display a bandage. His arm in a sling gave his body the excuse to occupy an entire sofa. None seemed to know the whereabouts of his regiment; none seemed to care. An officer of different character had spent the night in camp. His men were close to collapse; getting them food and supplies was his concern. But taken as a whole, concluded Olmsted, the breed of officers was mean and brutish.

The Sanitary Commission prepared seventy-five questions on the conditions of soldiers before, during, and after Bull Run. Seven inspectors examined thirty bodies of troops. Their findings formed the basis of Olmsted's *Report on the Demoralization of the Volunteers*, a scathing indictment of the Republican administration. Carelessly distributed rations, the needless waste of strength by marching four to twelve miles at double-quick time, indifference brought on by fatigue, heat, and no food and drink, and a general lack of confidence in the officers—all these points arranged themselves in a pattern of defeat. The soldiers had fought in "the most elementary and imperfect military organization"; their discipline was "little better than a mob" which did not know its leaders. They mistakenly believed the enemy superior in skill and numbers. False news spread about the size of Confederate reserves coming into battle; then panic ripped to tatters the shoddy military fabric, and the chickens of incapacity flew back to roost in Washington. Indolent, frivolous, and dissipated, they had learned nothing from disaster.

During the rout the soldiers felt no terror, but mocked and jeered at their officers. It was later that dejection set in. The New York Zouaves were the most demoralized. They had suffered exposure, fatigue, and exhaustion, and had never been paid. These reasons failed to account for their total collapse, thought Olmsted. He knew the Zouaves for hardiness, bravery, devotion, and self-sacrifice. In the light of defeat people saw only the absence of those qualities.

Everyone praised Rhode Island's 2nd Regiment, whose soldiers had good lodgings, clothes, and a variety of food; they enjoyed an excellent band, singing, dancing, social and athletic recreations; they observed daily religious ceremonies; they were known for the important names among their visitors. Rhode Islanders at Bull Run suffered with the rest, but retreated in good order.

What was the basic reason for demoralization? asked Olmsted. The citizen had identified his government with his country. He had offered his services with little thought of remuneration. Washington owed him suitable food and lodging; it was obliged to care for him sick or wounded. But what was the volunteer's lot? Hard bread and salt pork, green coffee, a shoddy blanket, and the damp earth to lie on. In the hospital the surgeon left him to the care of comrades, who generally refused to add nursing to their military duties. The recruit had come to the army expecting to fight a battle at once. Waiting became tedious and irksome. There was nothing to do but the "eternal" manual of arms and guard duty. Because he had answered his captain's insults, the recruit was set to work in filth. In one instance, noted Olmsted, the colonel kept his men at attention for one hour in the hottest summer sun, while he stood drinking at the bar of Willard's Hotel. Before electing their officers volunteers had no previous way of knowing that their captain was a "blackguard and a petty tyrant," their colonel a "politician," their surgeon a "quack," and their quartermaster a "knave." For lack of sports, the soldier chose the saloon; here he could give vent to his anger and escape into daydreams. When the drums began to roll, the army shoved an antiquated musket into his hands, and ordered him off to war. "War?" sneered Olmsted. "War without artillery and without cavalry?"

Simple appreciation of the citizen in uniform meant fair returns in regular rations, good blankets, and at least clean

straw for mattresses. For its own self-interest and self-preservation the government must treat him better than cattle. As it was, neglect had made the volunteer "soul sick." The Sanitary Commission had done all in its power to help him. It requested limiting the number of absences from camp, only to be told that the colonel knew his business; it suggested setting time limits on leaves of absence and forbidding the bringing of liquor into camp, only to be told that such orders could not be enforced. In short, the army snubbed all Sanitary proposals to improve discipline.

Within a week of Bull Run, Olmsted and his staff had thoroughly examined the causes of defeat, carefully preserving their details and accurately noting their influence. The commissioners knew of no other achievement in history comparable to the *Report on the Demoralization of the Volunteers*; but it was nothing as compared to the shock it gave them. Olmsted had carried their convictions. Yes, a new set of imbeciles had moved into Washington, and the American system of government met disaster poorly; but the commissioners dared not publish this philippic until later. Olmsted ignored the part of the states in furnishing troops; this he regarded the exclusive function of the national administration. Olmsted struck the commission's first plea for political nationalism, meaning a strong central government for a people living in a given area and conforming to similar cultural patterns.

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The United States was in for a long war. On July 24, 1861, Lincoln called General George Brinton McClellan to Washington to direct the armies. The country sensed relief, as the slow work of reorganization got under way. McClellan's remarkable energy increased popular confidence. The commissioners watched him tighten the reins of discipline and

infuse men with hopefulness; they knew that time and a dogged spirit would put the army in fighting trim. Indefatigable, McClellan visited every camp, and received new regiments to expand and strengthen his machine. By drill and review he brought his 50,000 troops a sense of pride. His purpose was to get volunteers to carry out orders, not to act like regulars.

With October came the test at Ball's Bluff, when Union recruits showed themselves better as soldiers than their officers as leaders. The Sanitary Commission at Washington sent hospital stores and blankets at once. Frederick Newman Knapp * and Dr. John Hancock Douglas * saw that the field hospitals were supplied. They gave clothing to soldiers who in the retreat had stripped off their uniforms to swim back across the Potomac. Knapp and Douglas could find no signs of demoralization. Patients in tent hospitals wanted to get well and meet the enemy again. Soldiers who had escaped unharmed were without the Bull Run blues. Lowell and Holmes, those favored sons of New England, were among the casualties. Holmes was well enough to sit up and smoke, but Lowell's wound was so serious that he could not be moved.

To get better officers McClellan reconstructed the general staff. He reminded those who liked to wander about Washington of the duties they owed their commands. His provost marshal closed the Washington saloons. A military commission examined volunteer officers and weeded out incompetents. Resignations of captains and lieutenants were numerous, but few majors and colonels gave up their posts. This examination requirement apparently discouraged indiscriminate appointments, but did not cause wholesale dismissals. During the Civil War there were 2,537 generals and a proportionate number of minor officers; a few hundred dismissals or resignations could not improve discipline. New appointees

were not likely to be superior to the displaced. Schemers who became officers by election generally made indifferent leaders. Hard knocks taught soldiers to choose efficient and courageous officers.

Organization of the armies went on slowly in the West. In October, 1861, General W. T. Sherman argued that effective Western defense called for an army of 200,000. Mad! cried the newspapers. The War Department soon relieved Sherman and placed him in a subordinate position. General Don Carlos Buell, his successor, devoted attention to discipline and drill. His nature was studious and reserved; few surpassed Buell's knowledge of the various duties of officers and men. He gave small encouragement to his medical corps; perhaps he thought that soldiers were made for fighting, and anything extra was of no consequence. General Prentiss at Camp Defiance, Cairo, put his men in fighting trim. They had faults and deficiences, noted a Sanitary inspector, but no martinet's strait jacket could throttle the "rollicking independence" of the American soldier.

In September, 1861, the Sanitary Commission congratulated government and country on the forward strides in discipline, morale, health, provisioning, and supply. In December, Olmsted reported good morale in all regiments, except in four that had suffered unduly from Bull Run. The sick list was the key to morale, for a small sick list was associated with high spirits. The army neglected healthful recreation. Gambling was a major attraction for troops left to their own devices; it admitted the sharper and kept the soldier from outside exercise. Only 42 of 200 regiments engaged in sports systematically; 156 had no outdoor recreation, while there were no reports from 2. Out of 200 about one-fifth had libraries, mostly of religious books. Bands were an object of pride; out of 200 regiments, 143 had bands, while 53 were without; there were no reports from 4. To develop sound

morale a military band was indispensable, said Olmsted. Soldiers needed one after defeat to restore the esprit de corps; they supported it by a self-imposed tax.

Sutlers were useful, if restricted by *Army Regulations*; but lacking supervision and proper control, they made for weak discipline. Some sutlers and officers formed "corrupt bargains," whereby the sutler made presents of wine to increase his influence. Both were known to engage in the sale of liquor, and so they kept the recruit from sending home his savings. Twelve out of 200 regiments had no sutlers in September and October. Of 188 sutlers 103 were appointed by colonels, 63 by the secretary of war, 14 by a board of regimental officers, 5 by state governors, and 3 by means not ascertained.

The sutler sold liquor in 31 regiments. Its sale was forbidden in 169, but in 177 regiments men had no difficulty in getting wine and spirits. More guilty than the sutler was the pie peddler, whose piecrusts hid a bottle of whisky. Drinking did not necessarily mean drunkenness, which was common in only 6 regiments; in 31 drunkenness occasionally took place; in 163 it was rare. Pay day and shortly after were times of jollity. The American volunteer was generally considered more temperate than the European soldier.

Olmsted defined discipline as "a habit of prompt and exact obedience under certain authority." He took issue with McClellan's double standard; to expect discipline of regulars but a weaker brand from volunteers gave rise to abuse and neglect. Admittedly the army had improved since Bull Run, said Olmsted, but laxity had by no means disappeared. The rewards of strong discipline came in lives saved. Strict enforcement of *Army Regulations* would prevent disease, and do more than the Sanitary Commission could ever propose. But administrative duties burdened the officers, who worked without clerical help, and frequently left him no time to push sanitary reform. Because the conscientious officer could

not do all he ought, the good of the country was bound to suffer.

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The Sanitary Commission slowly won the confidence of others. General Mansfield had once turned down a Sanitary offer to supervise a lodge for soldiers passing through Washington. Events forced him to change his mind. At first he would not allow the preparation of food for soldiers fatigued by travel; finally he allowed the serving of coffee and rations, specifying that the lodge must be under military control. Mansfield seemed afraid the commission would stuff the travel-worn with "sugar-plums."

McClellan felt that the commission had not received the favor it deserved. He expressed a wish to encourage it and profit from its experience. Toward the middle of September the general gave Bellows an interview in the presence of Secretary of War Cameron. McClellan's head was not large, but its proportions were harmonious. Constant exposure had given his face a deep tan; his hair was brown, his features regular, and his eyes "calm, direct, and powerful." The young commander moved with an excessively catlike grace, swaying and bending his "well-knit" and "perfectly balanced form." He accompanied his talk by spitting a little on the rug and playing with a dog. No one could call McClellan elegant, polished, or scholarly; but he was unaffectedly self-possessed, his complacency a blend of natural dignity and frankness. He spoke to the point with earnestness, honesty, and intelligence. His humanity and sympathy fitted him to win the "enthusiastic love of women and common soldiers." McClellan's conversation was free from sentimental, speculative, or religious references. Possibly he entertained a simple faith, for the general seemed to base his understanding of men and circumstances on intuition.

McClellan made small events yield large conclusions. He knew his place and its responsibilities. More conspicuous than "ingenuity, brilliancy, or originality" was the availability of his talents, his promptness and balance, his "superiority to routine and willingness to stand in the gap." He formed judgments quickly and struck at the heart of a matter. McClellan would do great things, but lacked the power to sustain true greatness; he had neither the "iron" of Wellington nor Washington's "reserved strength." This American, an intimate of success, was the "bright consummate flower of our railroad, telegraphic, and money-making system." [12]

Bellows, McClellan, and Cameron discussed the Medical Bureau and ways to cut tape. McClellan and Cameron declared their resolution to follow Sanitary advice. The general agreed to confer military status on inspectors; he said they should have authority to enforce health regulations. But as often as he kept the word of promise to Sanitary ears he broke it to their hopes. Inspectors discovered constant neglect and disobedience in camps; yet the commission accomplished much by pursuasion.

Catch-as-catch-can was the Sanitary policy. The commission was groping and feeling its way, assuming the nearest burden and heeding the loudest cries for help. But the Irish maxim—"When you see a head, hit it"—just would not do. Olmsted wanted a warlike tone and policy. Let the Sanitary Commission stand between the Medical Bureau and the people; let it be more "comprehensively humane" than the indifferent and bewildered community. The Sanitary rock must be a "large contingent fund," and its commandment should read, "Prevent rather than cure." Force indifferent Washington to do better, said Olmsted, even at the expense of some temporary cruelty.

All eyes inevitably rest on Lincoln in the history of the

[12] Bellows MSS. H. W. Bellows to Mrs. H. W. Bellows, Sept. 12, 1861, Washington, D.C.

Civil War. In the Sanitary story his presence is always shadowy. During September, Olmsted asked him to recommend "the purpose of the Commission to the confidence of the public." The president seemed shy about signing a circular; not until General Scott had set down his name did Lincoln add his. During October the commissioners held an interview with him. Looking older and more settled, Lincoln received them kindly. He appeared awkward and ill at ease; but he went straight to the point and spoke well. Frank and direct, Lincoln overcame all disposition to cavil. Commissioners left the interview pleased with the president's compliment and full of the belief that they had reached an important stage of development.

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In the first months Sanitary expenses did not go beyond $5,000. The commission depended on voluntary contributions. Because it believed the rebellion would be crushed with comparative ease, it asked for $50,000; this amount would permit a careful study of military hygiene.

Newspapers reminded the business community of the destruction that attended the Crimean and East Indian campaigns. They argued the case in monetary terms. Each soldier was a costly piece of national property; his enlistment, equipment, and training came to some $200; his death placed the burden of support on the citizens. The commission asked insurance companies for large amounts, for prudence demanded their support. According to the argument, the commission would save the nation thousands of men and millions of dollars. Failure to back it would mean losses in lives and the depression of property values. The nation needed a system of sanitary defense to protect camps from epidemics. Once disease had destroyed one army, the raising of another could only be accomplished at fearful cost.

Through argument and appeal the Sanitary Commissi raised a total of $12,807.95 by the end of June.

Government generosity made possible the curtailment expenses. It furnished offices, storehouses, and the buildin occupied as the Soldiers' Home in Washington; it also provided horses, ambulances, and army wagons for Sanitary inspectors and agents; it gave them every facility for visiting camps, hospitals, and army posts. The commission took no money from the government; it was unwilling to ask for a Congressional appropriation. Moral rectitude was its pride and honor; government aid would apparently tar these very qualities. The moral power on which their usefulness depended would be weakened, feared the commissioners, if they appeared to beg from the public treasury; they shunned the suspicion of connection with political machines and intrigue. To the power that created it the Sanitary Commission said, "Noli me tangere"; to the public from which government derived its powers the commissioners passed the hat.

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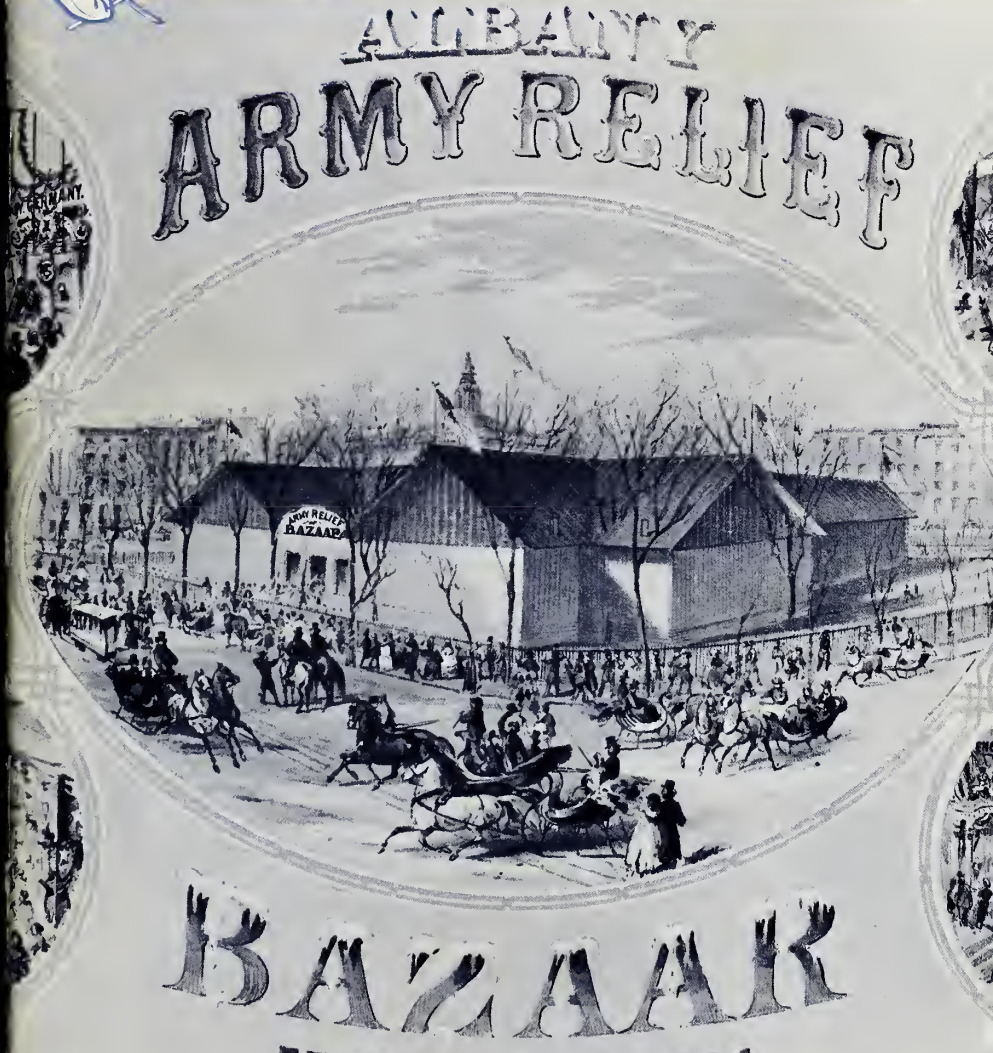
# NEW YORK STATE AND The CIVIL WAR

MARCH 1963



# NEW YORK STATE and THE CIVIL WAR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VOLUME 2 NUMBER 9 MARCH, 1963


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WHAT MR. SMITH WANTED MOST Back Cover


COVER PICTURE: A "sea of people swayed and surged through the vast area" of the Albany Army Relief Bazaar in 1864 and swelled total receipts to about $100,000, all for the benefit of "sick and wounded soldiers." Bazaar was held in this temporary building on Washington Avenue. Artist's conception of scene, reproduced as lithograph, is from the Manuscripts and History Section, New York State Library.


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LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOG CARD NUMBER: A 61-9661

Published monthly by the New York Civil War Centennial Commission, Albany, N. Y. Address all communications to P. O. Box 1861, Capitol Station, Albany, N. Y. Telephone HEmlock 6-1861


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DURING THE CIVIL WAR the regiment, of any branch of the service, was the highest permanent command. For purposes of organization in the field, regiments were combined into brigades, divisions and corps, but these were frequently changed, while the regiment, at least in theory, continued to exist. For this reason a regiment was given a relatively permanent symbol and this was its colors. In the minds of the men, the colors were the regiment itself, and many a soldier lost his life in defending the colors of his regiment.

Even more important than this, the regiment was the soldier's home during his life in the army. He might come to know the men of his mess or of his company more intimately, but it was his regiment that claimed his primary loyalty both during and after the war. For every single history of a company, or of a higher unit like a division or an army, you will find many hundreds of regimental histories on the shelves of libraries.

In Civil War days a regiment comprised about a thousand men and officers, consisted of ten companies and was commanded by a colonel. He had a lieutenant colonel and a major to assist him in command and administration, together with a number of staff officers and staff sergeants. Companies were just beginning to be designated by letter and one of these companies was called the color company — it had the right and honor of carrying the regimental colors.

In practice, the volunteer regiments of the Civil War attempted to keep their ranks filled by periodic recruiting at home. This differed widely among the states and even among the regiments of one state, but try as they did, they rarely succeeded in going into battle with half of their authorized strength, and usually with far less. The other men were sick in hospital or camp, home on furlough, on special detail, or off recruiting. This "effective" as opposed to "authorized" strength was always a problem for commanders.

There were regiments of infantry, of cavalry, of light and heavy artillery, and a few of engineers. Divided another way, on the Northern side there were regiments of Regulars, of State Militia, of State Volunteers, or Veterans Reserve Corps, of the U. S. Colored Troops, of Indian Volunteers, etc. In the South there was almost as wide a variety of types.

In the article that follows on New York Regiments in the Civil War, I do not discuss the grand strategy or the minor tactics of that war. I do not divulge biographical information or human interest stories about any of the great commanders or much about the little men who fought through the war in its ranks. There will be next to nothing on politics, or economics, or military science. Yet the subject — the regiment — was in those days, a hundred years ago, every bit as important to soldiers and to commanders as these other facets.

F. P. T.

# State Regiments Were Varied, Colorful Lot; Each Left Its Mark on Civil War History

By COL. FREDERICK P. TODD
Director of Museum
U. S. Military Academy

NEW YORK, ranking first in population and wealth among the States of the Union at the outbreak of the Civil War, maintained the country's largest and most carefully organized State army. In 1850 the New York State Militia — as it was called until 1862 when it was redesignated the National Guard of New York — contained some 51 active, uniformed regiments and a number of independent companies, all of which were grouped into brigades and divisions. During the wide reorganizations of 1846 to 1848 the State had completely eliminated its old-fashioned, enrolled militia and had forced hundreds of hitherto independent uniformed companies into regimental groupings. By 1860 the number of active regiments in this State had grown to 62, a fact little realized today.

The administration of this sizable force of nearly 19,000 rank and file required a command and staff of 532 officers including, for example, an inspector general and 32 division and brigade inspectors. The State published a large-size book of general regulations which provided for the government of its military forces. This was revised in 1858, 1863 and again in 1870, and was distributed to all commands. In addition, the State regularly issued sets of Scott's, Hardee's and other military manuals.

The Adjutant General of New York reported in 1860 that the Militia system of his State was functioning within what he called "the impracticable and absurb law of Congress" but was "untrammeled by its antique features." The ten years prior to the Civil War is remarkable for the effort made to force the old-fashioned separate companies to accept regimental discipline and loyalty, to demand an improvement in drill and attendance, and to increase the general efficiency of the organization. The relative strength of her system permitted New York to respond rapidly to the call of President Lincoln in 1861 and to maintain her State militia virtually intact throughout the Civil War.

The regiments of New York State were numbered until 1865 in a single series that included all branches. They varied considerably in strength and effectiveness; those in the First Division, which embraced the metropolitan areas of New York City, had as a rule from six to ten active companies, while regiments located in predominantly rural areas might have only two companies that were really active. A New York militia regiment of the 1850's consisted on paper of eight battalion companies, lettered A through H after 1857, and two flank companies — lettered R and L, for right and left. By 1860 some regiments had begun to letter their companies A through K, omitting J. Except for four of the regiments (the First, Third, Fourth and 70th), all served as infantry of some sort, although tradition, armament, and the kind of drill manual being employed lent seeming variation. Thus one finds regiments described in the roster of 1860 as "rifles doing duty as light infantry" or "artillery doing duty as infantry" or merely "artillery", only to discover that they were all essentially in the same branch of the service.

Further to complicate matters, these infantry regiments often contained one or two companies of a different branch than the others. Thus the Eighth Regiment (which is now the 258th Artillery in the Bronx) had eight infantry companies and one of cavalry. This cavalry company was converted to artillery and had the dubious distinction of turning over its guns to other men on the eve of First Bull Run. The 19th Regiment in Newburgh had seven companies of infantry, one of cavalry, one of rifles and a section of light artillery. Such variations were, of course, holdovers from the days of independent companies, and they tended to multiply the kind of uniforms worn in a single regiment.

New York regiments also deviated widely in such characteristics as wealth, traditions and national origins. The older corps tended to be "native American" in composition and took their membership from the wealthier classes of society. Probably the Seventh Regiment (now the 107th Infantry), and Brooklyn regiments like the 14th and 23rd, or Albany organizations like the 10th, illustrate this class. Regiments which had been formed more recently, especially in New York City, were often completely foreign in personnel, language and institutions. Such fraternalism is understandable among immigrant groups but in one instance a deeper purpose was involved. During the 1850's three New York regiments were raised for no other reason than to train Irishmen as soldiers so that they could return to Ireland and fight for Irish freedom; one of these was the 69th — now the 165th Infantry. Cases of direct alignment of regiments with political parties was not unknown, although it was less common than is generally believed.

All of these variations were reflected in the uniforms the regiments wore. Some of the older ones, like the Seventh and Eighth wore gray which had become a sort of traditional militia uniform in the country. A few wore distinctively national costumes, and the outstanding unit in this category was the 79th Regiment, the Cameron Highlanders,

A full regiment on parade: the 48th New York (Perry's Saints) at Fort Pulaski, Ga., 1862.

which wore complete Scottish dress, including kilts. But the vast bulk of the New York organized militia wore blue uniforms very similar to those of the Regular Army. Their weapons, which had been supplied in the main by the Federal Government, were also similar if more old-fashioned.

This was the force that New York had available to meet the call of President Lincoln. In answer to that call the State sent 11 regiments (8,450 men) to Washington, in all but one case for three months' service. Nine of these came from New York City, one (the famous 20th) from Kingston and one from Albany.

Under the laws of a century ago, a militia regiment as such could only be ordered outside the State for three months at a time. Even before President Lincoln's first call of April 15th, 1861, it was obvious to New York's legislators that a military force would be required in the field for a longer time than that. On the 16th, therefore, the Legislature authorized the enrollment of 30,000 "volunteer militia" to serve for two years. On this authority the Governor established 38 new infantry regiments, numbered in a separate series commencing with "1st", and soon after recruiting for them began throughout the State. At length

White gloves were soon discarded. Picture, courtesy of New Hampshire Historical Society.

these two-year regiments were accepted by the General Government, at which time their status changed from Militia to Volunteers.

So began the series of volunteer infantry regiments that ultimately totalled 194. The resultant duplication of numbers caused some confusion and much vexation, especially in those old militia outfits that volunteered for three years and then had to give up their traditional numbers.

The first 38 volunteer regiments left New York for either Washington or the Virginia Peninsula between late April and July, 1861. In July also went the four volunteer regiments organized by the Union Defense Committee of New York (39th, 40th, 41st, 42nd), all of whom were specially uniformed and outfitted by the committee, and four militia regiments that had volunteered for the war (the Second, Ninth, 14th and 79th, the first three being redesignated, much against their will, 82nd, 83rd and 84th). About the same time came a request from Washington for mounted troops. A Cavalry company from the First and another from the Third Militia Regiments were sent for three months' service. This was the status of the active forces of New York on the eve of First Bull Run.

In mid-July, 1861, recruiting was suspended despite the fact that new companies were being formed all over the State. Then came the reverses at Bull Run with which a new period of the War began. There followed for the next four years a series of calls on New York for volunteers and militia which ended in this State furnishing a total of over a half million men to the Union Army. Most were volunteers, of course, and this force comprised 27 regiments and eight companies of cavalry, 15 regiments and 34 companies of artillery, 182 regiments and eight companies of infantry, and three regiments of engineers.

After its call in 1861 the New York National Guard saw Federal service in some force on three more occasions, beside furnishing many units for special duty at home. The opening of the Antietam Campaign led to 12 regiments being called out for three months' service. In 1863 a force of nearly 14,000 men, all from the militia, and embracing 26 regiments, was mustered into Federal service at the commencement of the Gettysburg Campaign, while others were mobilized into State service to quell the draft riots that broke out in July in New York City. Finally, the year 1864 saw 13 regiments and eight companies in Federal service for 100 days, watching the Canadian border, guarding prisoners at Elmira and garrisoning the defenses of New York Harbor.

**A left-handed marksman? Not at all. This daguerreotype of an unidentified New York cavalryman, as with all daguerreotypes, came out backwards. From War Museum, State Capitol, Albany.**

How were these volunteer regiments raised? In general, and especially in the first year of the war, it was pretty close to what had been called the "proprietary system," used in England to raise new regiments for her 18th century wars in America and, later, for the wars against Napoleon.

When the King needed an additional regiment he went to a nobleman he knew and offered him a commission and a set sum of money to raise one. This man then went to friends in his community and offered a part of the money, plus the promise to secure commissions from the King, if each would raise a company. In time, the successful recruiters were rewarded with ranks from lieutenant colonel to captain, and they in turn made the same bargains with their lieutenants. Dipping again into his funds, the colonel bought uniforms, food, tents and all the other supplies the newly-raised regiment might need, so that it would be in shape to be mustered into the King's service. When this was done, the men's pay began and the colonel and the other officers settled back to count what money — called the "net off reckonings" — they had left. This was, in effect, their profit on the transaction.

The Governor of New York had to do much the same thing, although by the 1860's a lot of the chance for profit had been removed. Indeed, the men raising volunteer regiments and companies in this country usually found themselves considerably out of pocket before it was over. Then, too, there was an old militia tradition that companies so organized could elect their officers, and not always did they select the fellow who had borne the cost of recruiting as their captain. In all it was a confusing business and some regiments got off to a bad start because of politics and bickering during the organizational stage. One added point: the men were quick to appreciate the necessity of trained leadership, and whenever they could, they secured the services of a professional soldier, preferably a West Pointer, as their colonel.

Each of New York's regiments, like each of the soldiers in them, was a distinctive personality. There were gallant regiments and cowardly ones, disciplined and undisciplined ones — large and small, well dressed and sloppy, recruit and veteran. There were even mutinous outfits. But by and large, like the men, the regiments tended to be faithful and long-suffering and, in the end, good soldiers.

Consider a few of these outfits and a few of the men in them, picking the regiments almost at random:

We can start with one of the great regiments of all time, the Fifth Volunteers, or "Duryee's Zouaves." This was a two-year regiment, raised in New York City, that stayed in service until the close of the war. Altogether 2,164 men were recruited for it, and when the last 700 or so returned to New York in 1865 to be mustered out, there were still 100 in the ranks who had joined the outfit in 1861. William Fox's *Regimental Losses in the Civil War* contains a list of what he called the "300 Fighting Regiments"; the Fifth is there.

During its service this Zouave outfit was part of a division of Regulars and fully maintained its right to be there. General Sykes called it the best volunteer organization he had ever seen. It distinguished itself repeatedly but is probably best remembered for its coolness and gallantry at Gaine's Mill where it faced a hail of Confederate musketry that cut down a third of its men. After an especially deadly volley it halted in line to count off so that its movements would not be deranged by the gaps in its ranks.

The regiment wore a Zouave uniform throughout the war, very similar to that worn by the French Zouaves: blue jacket and vest trimmed with red, very full red pants, a red fez and yellow greaves. For parade the men added a white turban and white gaiters.

Among its commanding officers, the first was Abram Duryee, wealthy merchant and a former colonel of the Seventh Regiment Militia. When Duryee got promoted, Gouverneur K. Warren, U.S.M.A. Class of 1850, took his place. Warren had been an engineer, taught mathematics at West Point, and fought Indians; he too was promoted and went on to the Round Top episode at Gettysburg and later to command the Fifth Army Corps. The third colonel was Hiram Duryea, no relation to the first colonel, who also became a brigadier general. Still another Duryea from the regiment rose to general's rank. Its fourth colonel was killed in action at Cold Harbor in 1864, its fifth at Five Forks in 1865, and its sixth and last was wounded in action at Appomattox on almost the last day of the war. A fighting regiment from the top down.

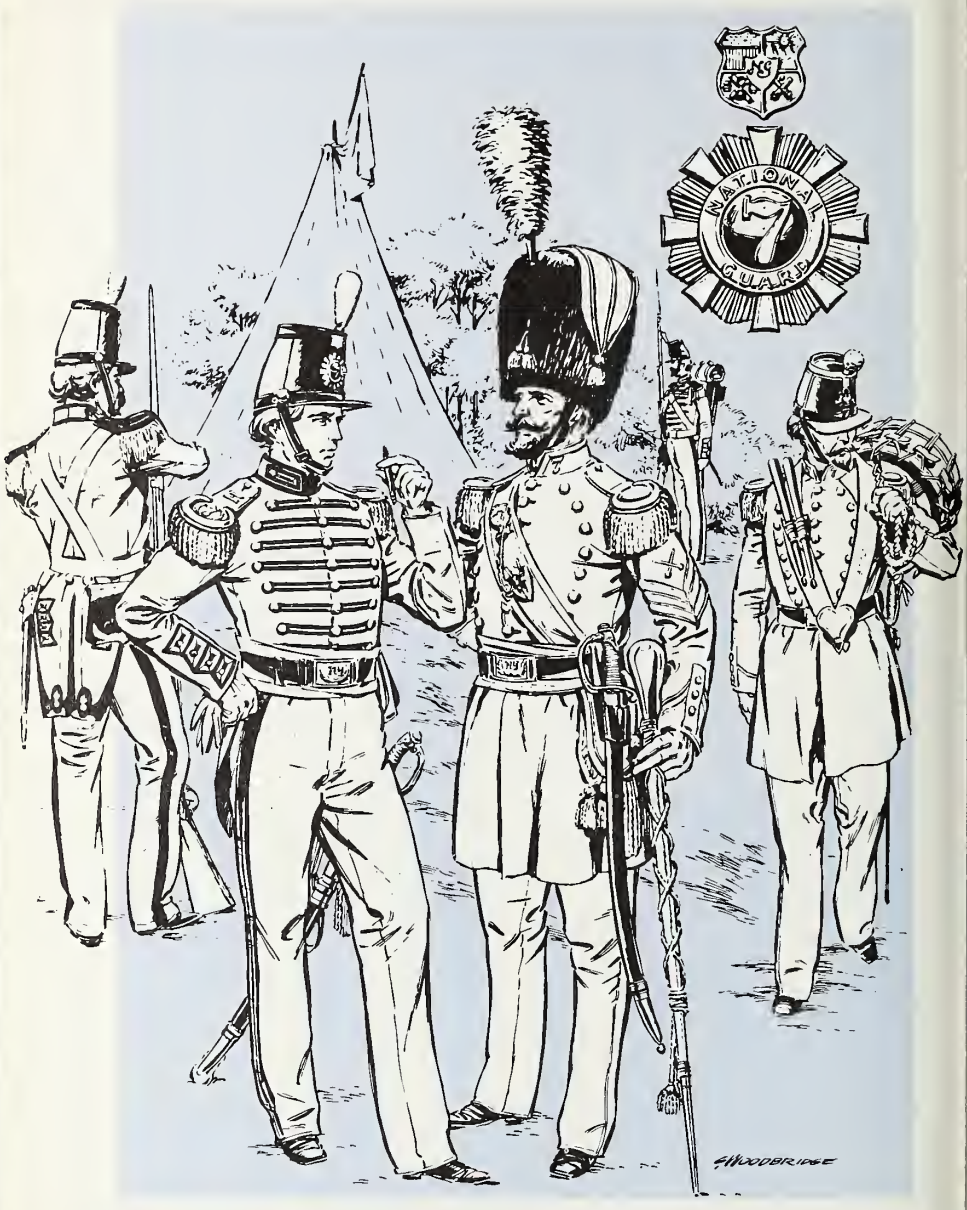
To show that all the smart and gallant regiments did not necessarily have a low number, there was the 140th Volunteers, the "Rochester Racehorses," which was mustered in during September, 1862. This crack outfit was first commanded by Colonel Patrick H. O'Rorke, who had graduated at the head of his class at West Point in 1861. It fought in nearly all the battles of the Army of the Potomac, from Fredericksburg to Appomattox, beginning in the Third Brigade of Sykes' Division, Fifth Corps. It is usually thought of, however, in connection with its spirited seizure and defense of Little Round Top, where O'Rorke was killed, cheering on his men. The entire Third Brigade was issued Zouave uniforms in 1863, partially in honor of this action. (The March, 1962, issue of NEW YORK STATE AND THE CIVIL WAR tells more about this episode and about the colors of the 140th. Malcolm Wilson, the present Lieutenant Governor of New York, is the great-grandson of Matthew Wilson, who served in the regiment).

*Continued on page 12*

**A PREVIEW: ORIGINAL DRAWINGS by WOODBRIDGE**

For four yeors Colonel Todd hos hod under preporotion o comprehensive book on Americon militory equipoge — uniforms, orms, occoutrements, flogs ond insignio, 1851-72. Art colloborotor is George Woodbridge, o sompling of whose exocting, reolistic work oppeors on next three poges.

Zouaves of the Fifth New York (Duryee Zouaves), 1863




**Dress uniforms of the Seventh Regiment, N.Y.S.M.**

**Uniforms of Tenth Regiment, N.Y.S.M., of Albany.**

The Second Cavalry Regiment, known as the Harris Light Cavalry, was formed by Judge Henry E. Davies of Fishkill Landing, and named after Senator Ira Harris of Albany. Davies wanted to raise a regiment for the war and in July, 1861, seeking out the center of such matters, went to Washington where he managed to see General Scott. By then Scott had come to appreciate that cavalry would be needed and the general urged him to organize a regiment of that arm and and to recommend its top officers. This Judge Davies did, selecting among others H. Judson Kilpatrick (they later called him "Kill Cavalry") who had graduated from West Point that year, and Davies' nephew, Henry E. Davies, a Harvard man with a degree in law from Columbia. Both later became notable leaders of cavalry. The "Harris Light" made a gallant record in the Cavalry Corps of the Army of the Potomac, suffering casualties in more than 40 battles and engagements. A total of 2,528 men and officers joined its ranks during the four years of its life.

Few regiments started with so much promise or ended with so little accomplished as the 11th Regiment Volunteers, the First Fire Zouaves. Composed of New York City volunteer firemen, it was commanded initially by that amazing character, Elmer E. Ellsworth. Much money was put into its initial outfit; it received for example, an expensive regimental color from Mrs. John Jacob Astor. Ellsworth himself designed its first grey Zouave uniforms, in which it went to war amid vast publicity and the thundering cheers of New Yorkers and — alas — the strong smell of Irish whiskey. As everyone knows, Ellsworth was killed

Owned by State of New York, this painting by James Walker depicts the 12th New York State Militia an parade. Men wear the chasseur unifarm intraduced by Calanel Daniel Butterfield.

at Alexandria, thus providing New York with its first martyr. Thereafter no one could handle the regiment. Its action at the First Bull Run was fairly creditable. It supported the batteries of Griffin and Ricketts, but broke like the rest and was reformed later with difficulty. Eventually it had to be returned to New York City, where many of its men had already travelled on their own. There followed duty at Newport News which was equally unsatisfactory and, after little more than a year of service, it was disbanded in June, 1862.

The 12th Regiment, State Militia, was formed in the 1840's. Still in existence, the old 12th New York (Independence Guard) is one of New York City's celebrated regiments. Its most famous colonel was Daniel Butterfield, whose invention of "Taps" is well known but whose devising of a gorgeous blue and white chasseur uniform for the 12th is less so. Had Butterfield had his way, this would have been the dress of the entire U. S. Army and it *would* have been better known. When the regiment returned from its first three months' service it was reorganized for three years. Not having the full number of companies in this war, the 12th (there was another 12th Militia staying at home) consolidated with the 12th New York Volunteers which had been raised in Onondaga County and was also low in strength. The present regiment (212th Artillery) bears battle honors of all three 12th Regiments of the Civil War, the only case of an amalgamation of militia and volunteers with the same number that the author knows of.

Other New York Militia regiments that still serve in New York City include the 14th Brooklyn and the 69th (or "Fighting Irish"). Both are included among Fox's "300 Fighting Regiments," a rare honor. The 14th fought splendidly — and in their distinctive scarlet pants and caps — from First Bull Run through Spotsylvania. It established its place in history, however, on the first day of Gettysburg.

The 14th enjoyed another distinction in the Army of the Potomac, that of minstrels. No Broadway show ever commanded the attention of the available public to the extent that the Brooklyn minstrels did in the winter camp at Culpeper.

The 69th Regiment, on returning to New York City after its first service of three months, organized in its armory a volunteer regiment called by the same number, which became the first unit of the Irish Brigade. Still keeping up its militia status and going into the field on short calls in 1862, 1863 and 1864, the old 69th cadred a second volunteer regiment, the 182nd New York, which became part of the Corcoran Legion, another celebrated Irish brigade. Thus the 69th of the Civil War was actually three regiments, all with striking records. The 69th Volunteers, for example, lost more men in action, killed and wounded, than any other infantry organization from New York State, a total of 998 men and officers.

Another militia corps, equally celebrated for its active campaigning, was the 20th Regiment of Kingston, in Ulster County, now the 156th

Artillery. A century ago its insignia was the bloody hand of Ulster. This outfit was commanded by Colonel George W. Pratt — country squire, state senator and a doctor of philosophy, plus being an excellent officer. It went out on the first call for three months, returned and organized as a volunteer regiment for the rest of the war. Pratt was mortally wounded at Manassas and died in Albany. Two of the regiment's battle-torn colors were presented to his young son in 1864, the Governor responding for Master Pratt, and these ultimately came to rest in a chateau in France. In 1961 the two flags were returned to New York by Count Henri de Libran to rejoin the other colors of this famous organization, now in Albany.

This celebrated New York corps was raised in the Dutch service in 1660, which makes it older than any British regiment save the Royal Scots; it entered the English service as a trainband in 1665, and the American service as the Regiment of Ulster County in 1775. It left Kingston for the Civil War in April, 1861, and was finally mustered out in January, 1866 — a longer war period than any other New York regiment. It is still in service, 303 years later.

The 39th Regiment Volunteers (the Garibaldi Guard) was a really bizarre outfit. It was one of the regiments raised by the Union Defense Committee of New York, acting as a representative of the General Government. Its ranks contained three companies of Germans, three of Hungarians, and one each of Swiss, Italians, Frenchmen and Spaniards. It wore an all-Italian Bersaglieri uniform, complete with green cock's-feather plume, probably in memory of Garibaldi. And it went to war with six vivandieres, ladies carrying canteens of spirits and probably confused ideas of their future duties.

The first colonel of the 39th was Frederick George D'Utassy, an adventurer and reputedly a dancing master and circus rider. He ended by being cashiered and sent to Sing Sing. Some of the other officers were equally questionable, and early in its career the regiment marched on Washington in open mutiny. Fortunately it was on the south side of the Potomac and the authorities were able to close Long Bridge in time. In September, 1862, the entire regiment was captured at Harper's Ferry. Despite this sorry beginning, the 39th pulled itself together and became a reliable, hard-fighting outfit, rated among the best in the Army of the Potomac. Its men re-enlisted in 1864 and served all the way through the war.

The First Dragoons, or 19th Cavalry, was first organized as infantry at Portage, N. Y., converted to cavalry in 1863, and was rated among the highest for discipline and efficiency. Its first commander was Alfred Gibbs, a West Pointer who had served in the U. S. Mounted Rifles in the Mexican War and later Indian campaigns. During all its mounted service it was in the First Cavalry Division, Army of the Potomac. Over 1400 men entered its ranks during the war, of whom 261 died in the field. At Todd's Tavern, in the Wilderness, it made a desperate dis-

Col. Frederick Gearge D'Utassy organized and for two years headed the 39th New Yark Infantry. Known by variaus names, principally the Garibaldi Guard, the 39th cansisted of Germans, Hungarians, Swiss, Italians, Frenchmen and others. D'Utassy here wears eye-catching unifarm adapted fram attire of crack Italian army corps af riflemen and sharpshooters. D'Utassy was cashiered from army and traded his fancy military unifarm for the grim stripes of Sing Sing Prisan. *Phato by caurtesy U.S.M.A. Library, West Point.*

mounted fight and sustained the heaviest loss of any cavalry regiment in a single action in the war. The regiment made a point of being dragoons and of fighting on foot. At Cold Harbor it defended a position with its band playing gaily throughout the entire fight.

In the first burst of enthusiasm of volunteering, every element in New York City felt it had to be represented, and the Bowery Boys were no exception. William Wilson was a political boss of considerable power among the roughest class of Irish immigrants and from among these he raised the Sixth Regiment of Volunteers, named for him "Billy Wilson's Zouaves." They were too poor to afford Zouave uniforms, but the Zouave name worked magic in recruiting and they clung to it. Their first clothing consisted of ready-made suits of rough gray cloth, the sort sold for slave field-hands in the South, with broad-brimmed hats. This soon wore out and the State provided a second of blue trimmed with red. Then the regiment was sent to Florida where Billy's boys from the Bowery found themselves with a body of U. S. Infantry, hard drilled and stiff-spined. There they received full U. S. regulation uniforms and in time the Sixth became as spit-and-polish as the Regulars, even down to wearing white gloves and brass scales. In their earlier, rougher days each of the Wilson Zouaves carried a bowie knife and most added a revolver or a pistol. One battle ended that nonsense, but they managed to hang on to their regimental mascot, a goat named "Billy," throughout their entire active service.

The celebrated Seventh Regiment of Militia was already 55 years old when the Civil War broke out — and one of the best known regiments

Proudly displaying their battle-torn colors, these frock-coated soldiers were members of 20th New York (United Turner Rifles). Photograph from Buffalo Historical Society.

in the country at the time. The biographers of Abraham Lincoln called it "the corps d'elite of the whole Union." It still is in flourishing condition, in its armory at 66th Street and Park Avenue, New York City. There is good reason to believe that the Seventh was responsible — or in part responsible, at least — for the adoption of gray by the Confederacy. It had worn gray since 1824, wore it all through the Civil War, and until very recent years.

The Seventh was the first regiment to leave the State in the Civil War — on April 19, 1861, anniversary of the Battle of Lexington. Two more calls came after that. The regiment never served in battle but it did furnish over 500 officers to the Union Army.

The power, political and social, wielded by a regiment of this type in Civil War days is illustrated by an account of its struggle to procure suitable firearms in the years before the war. It had carried flintlocks until 1854 when it received very inferior conversions. Dissatisfied with these muskets it repeatedly requested more modern minie rifles. Finally, in 1858, it sent a regimental committee to Washington, armed with letters from prominent New Yorkers and accompanied by Senator William H. Seward. It waited upon Secretary of War Floyd and demanded the rifles in, as a contemporary wrote, "a most earnest and peremptory manner." In the end, since the committee refused to leave the War Department without the order, Secretary Floyd issued it and the regiment received its muskets.

The 44th Volunteers was an extraordinary command, called "Ellsworth's Avengers," specially recruited from unmarried, able-bodied men under 30 years of age, standing at least 5′ 8″, and of "good moral character." The original plan had been to enlist one man from every ward and town in the State. While this did not work out, the men did come from every county, and they averaged 22 years of age and 5′ 10″ in height. They were promised a Zouave uniform which they got and wore throughout the war. The 44th made a fine record, and Fox lists them among his "300 Fighting Regiments." At Malvern Hill, after a bayonet charge, it brought back more prisoners than its own strength.

The 55th Regiment, N.Y.S.M. and later Volunteers, was the Garde Lafayette, formed in 1857 and made up principally of Frenchmen from New York City. Its colonel while on active service was Baron Philip Regis de Trobriand, a French noblman who had come to this country, dabbled a little in poetry and prose, married an heiress, and become an American citizen. As a militia regiment the 55th was small in size and never able to recruit to full strength, perhaps because there may not have been many Frenchmen in New York at the time. It lost heavily at Fair Oaks, on the Peninsula, and had to be reduced to a battalion shortly afterward. In December, 1862, long before its time was up, unable to recruit more men, the remains of the 55th were transferred to another regiment. The Garde Lafayette was never a great outfit in any sense, but at least for a year it had brightened the rather grim ranks of the Army of the Potomac with its French uniforms. Several of its flags are in Albany.

Most of the New York regiments had names as well as numbers. Many were geographic tags like the Albany, the Oneida, or the Sullivan County Regiments. Others honored prominent persons like the Harris Light Cavalry or the Astor Rifles. And still others adopted or were given flamboyant titles like the Orange Blossoms, the Iron Hearted Regiment, and The Enfants Perdue.

And so forth for hundreds more! The over-all record of New York regiments was excellent. Fox lists 59 of them among his "300 Fighting Regiments" of the war. A New York regiment lost more men killed in a single battle (Fifth New York at Manassas, 117 killed out of 490) than any other infantry outfit in the Union Army. The Irish Brigade, with three New York regiments, was probably the best known of any brigade organization in the war, with an unusual reputation for dash and gallantry. Its losses in killed and wounded were over 4,000 men, more than ever belonged to the brigade at any one time.

New York can well be proud of the regiments that bore its name. Their colors, for the most part, rest today in the State Capitol in Albany. These flags are being restored and preserved in honor of the men who fought under them, and as symbols of our great heritage of freedom. The West Point Museum is proud of the part it has been playing in administering this important project.

# Freedom Document Up for Grabs In $1 Lottery

By MASON TOLMAN
Associate Librarian
New York State Library

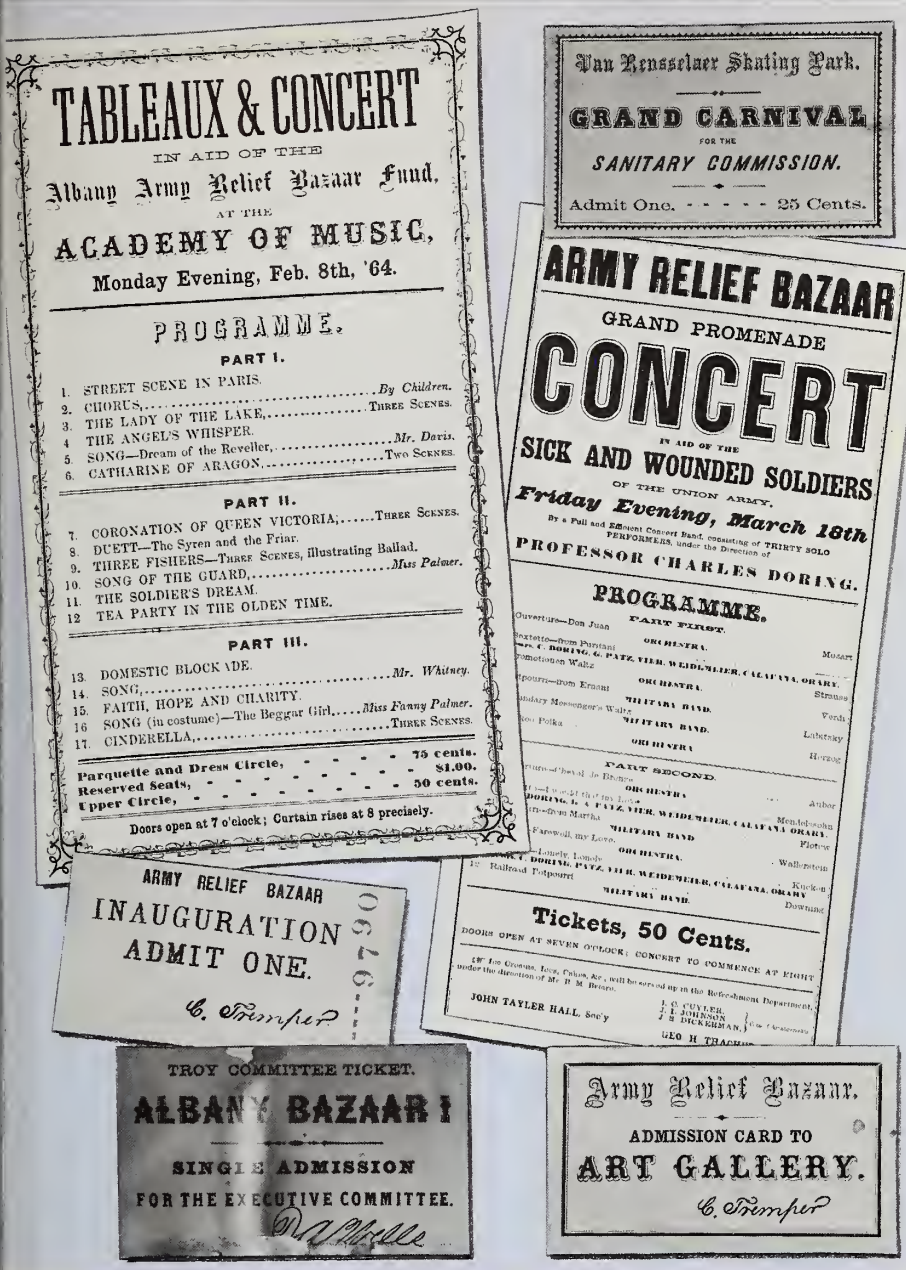
THAT THE STATE OF NEW YORK owns Abraham Lincoln's priceless original draft of the Emancipation Proclamation is due to an Albany woman, a lottery, a wealthy abolitionist, the State Legislature and — of course — the generosity of the President, himself.

On January 4, 1864, F. W. Seward, son of the onetime Governor of New York and Secretary of State in the Lincoln cabinet, and his father's Assistant Secretary of State at the time, wrote as follows to Mrs. Emily W. Barnes of Albany, daughter of publisher Thurlow Weed:

"I have the pleasure of sending you, with the President's permission, the original draft of his September proclamation. The body of it is in his own handwriting, the pencilled additions in the hand of the Secretary of State, and the final beginning and ending in the hand of the chief clerk."

In July, 1865, Dr. Henry A. Holmes, New York State librarian, wrote: "This original and only draft of the First Emancipation Proclamation, as described below by the Assistant Secretary of State, was presented to the Albany Army Relief Bazaar in Feb., 1864, and brought the sum of $1,100 to its funds. It became the property of Gerrit Smith, who presented it to the United States Sanitary Commission. In 1865, it was purchased by vote of the Legislature, of the Commission, for $1,000, and ordered to be deposited in the State Library. Albany, July 1865." What intervened was the Albany Army Relief Bazaar, which started Lincoln's original draft of the Emancipation Proclamation on its way to the collections of the New York State Library.

In the vast and invaluable collections of the New York Public Library there is housed an archive, inherited from the Astor Library, which documents the history of one of the most effective and important volunteer agencies in the history of warfare. This important but little remembered group of devoted citizens was known by the unlikely title of the "U. S. Sanitary Commission." The name at once suggests such activities as the inspection of drains, but in fact the sanitizing of living conditions for military personnel was only one of its multitude of good works. It attracted support from many walks of life. Although a number of its staunchest supporters were clergymen, like its founder, the Rev. Dr.



# TABLEAUX & CONCERT

IN AID OF THE

Albany Army Relief Bazaar Fund,

AT THE

ACADEMY OF MUSIC,

Monday Evening, Feb. 8th, '64.

## PROGRAMME.

**PART I.**

1. STREET SCENE IN PARIS. ..... *By Children.*
2. CHORUS, ..... THREE SCENES.
3. THE LADY OF THE LAKE, .....
4. THE ANGEL'S WHISPER. ..... *Mr. Davis.*
5. SONG—Dream of the Reveller, ..... TWO SCENES.
6. CATHARINE OF ARAGON, .....

**PART II.**

7. CORONATION OF QUEEN VICTORIA; ..... THREE SCENES.
8. DUETT—The Syren and the Friar.
9. THREE FISHERS—THREE SCENES, illustrating Ballad.
10. SONG OF THE GUARD, ..... *Miss Palmer.*
11. THE SOLDIER'S DREAM.
12. TEA PARTY IN THE OLDEN TIME.

**PART III.**

13. DOMESTIC BLOCKADE. ..... *Mr. Whitney.*
14. SONG, .....
15. FAITH, HOPE AND CHARITY.
16. SONG (in costume)—The Beggar Girl, ..... *Miss Fanny Palmer.*
17. CINDERELLA, ..... THREE SCENES.

Parquette and Dress Circle, - - - - - - - 75 cents.
Reserved Seats, - - - - - - - - - - - $1.00.
Upper Circle, - - - - - - - - - - - - 50 cents.

Doors open at 7 o'clock; Curtain rises at 8 precisely.

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GRAND PROMENADE

CONCERT

IN AID OF THE

SICK AND WOUNDED SOLDIERS

OF THE UNION ARMY,

*Friday Evening, March 18th*

By a Full and Efficient Concert Band, consisting of THIRTY SOLO PERFORMERS, under the Direction of

PROFESSOR CHARLES DORING.

PROGRAMME.

PART FIRST.

Ouverture—Don Juan ..... Mozart

Sextette—from Puritani ..... ORCHESTRA.

MRS. C. DORING, C. PATZ, TIER, WEIDEMEIER, CALAFATA, ORARY.

Promotion Waltz ..... Strauss

Pot-pourri—from Ernani ..... ORCHESTRA.

Sunday Messenger's Waltz ..... MILITARY BAND. Verdi

Geo. Polka ..... MILITARY BAND. Labitzky

..... ORCHESTRA. Herold

PART SECOND.

Grand Festival in Bridge ..... ORCHESTRA. Auber

[illegible] ..... DORING, C. PATZ, TIER, WEIDEMEIER, CALAFATA, ORARY. Mendelssohn

Air—from Martha ..... MILITARY BAND. Flotow

Farewell, my Love. ..... ORCHESTRA. Wallerstein

Lonely Lonely ..... DORING, PATZ, TIER, WEIDEMEIER, CALAFATA, ORARY. Kuckon

Railroad Potpourri ..... MILITARY BAND. Downing

Tickets, 50 Cents.

DOORS OPEN AT SEVEN O'CLOCK; CONCERT TO COMMENCE AT EIGHT

Ice Creams, Ices, Cakes, &c., will be served up in the Refreshment Department, under the direction of Mr. D. M. Bearse.

JOHN TAYLER HALL, Sec'y

J. C. CUYLER,
J. I. JOHNSON,
J. H. DICKERMAN,

Committee.

GEO. H. TRACHE

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ARMY RELIEF BAZAAR

INAUGURATION

ADMIT ONE.

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C. Trimper

Century-old program natices and admissian tickets ta varied attractians of Albany Army Relief Bazaar are reproduced by caurtesy af Manuscripts and History Sectian, New York State Library. From same source came illustrations shown an pages 21, 22, 23 and 24.

Henry Whitney Bellows, such public-spirited citizens as George Templeton Strong of New York, and Horace Howard Furness, the Shakespearean scholar, were tireless in its support. Katherine Prescott Wormeley characterized the Commission as the "great artery which bears the people's love to the people's army." Not all of the comments on the Commission were as laudatory. It was a constant thorn in the side of the Medical Department of the Army, and the Secretary of War reportedly was unable to mention its name without swearing. (William Quentin Maxwell, in his excellent book *Lincoln's Fifth Wheel,* has done a fine job of describing the Commission and its works).

The Commission reached into many aspects of American life during the Civil War period. Even the social life of the "home front" was affected. A series of bazaars, to raise funds for the relief of Union soldiers who were sick, wounded or destitute, was organized as a part of its operations. These fairs were held in numerous places — Brooklyn, Chicago, Washington, and elsewhere. One of the most successful and colorful was that held in Albany in February and March of 1864.

The Albany Army Relief Bazaar is chronicled in a delightful "newspaper" called the *Canteen,* which announced on February 22, 1864, that it "will be a live enterprising paper." In its first issue it reported that the fair would be held in a specially constructed building on Washington Avenue which it described in some detail, giving appropriate credit to the designers and builders. The structure, it reported, had risen like the "palace of Aladdin," and would seem to rival that fabulous creation in the sumptuousness of its appointments. The variety of exhibits and booths described runs the gamut from military curiosa to perfumery. Indians, Shakers, the Swiss, and the cities of Troy and Saratoga Springs were among the hundreds of subjects to be exposed to the public gaze for edification and, hopefully, profit for the cause. The *Canteen's* advertisers were numerous and included an M. D. who described the horrors of catarrh and a device for its alleviation; a Gents Furnishing Emporium, a Cheap Cash Store, the China Tea Co., and the State Street High School. Also in this issue was a poem which was reputed to have been produced on a recently patented poetry machine (apparently an apocryphal forerunner of the electronic "brains" of today). The poem included a verse referring to the Emancipation Proclamation which the President had given to the fair to be sold in support of its cause. Rather irreverently, it said:

*The President sent in a Draft-;*
*What else could be expected*
*From one who's dealt in nothing else*
*Ever since he was elected . . .*

Apparently the machine's metre control needed some adjustment.

The opening of the Bazaar on the evening of February 22 was an inspiring event. Mayor George H. Thacher in his opening remarks indicated that the birthday of the "Father of his Country" was considered

# Army Relief Bazaar Buildings,

## ACADEMY PARK, ALBANY, N. Y., Jan. 18, 1864.

THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES, through the Secretary of State, having generously donated to this Bazaar (which is to be held at Albany, in the month of February, A. D., 1864, in aid of the Sanitary Commission for the benefit of our Sick and Wounded Soldiers) the original draft of his FIRST EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION, dated September 22d, A. D., 1862: the undersigned, a Special Committee appointed for that purpose, hereby give public notice that the said Proclamation will be sold by issuing a series of Tickets, duly numbered from One to Five Thousand, at One Dollar for each Ticket. The number of Tickets issued not to exceed Five Thousand, but the issue may be limited to any less number in the discretion of the Committee. The drawing to be made by putting the various numbers or names of the purchasers of Tickets sold in the same wheel used by the Provost Marshal of the 14th Congressional District of the State of New York in making the draft of soldiers for said District. The holder of the first Ticket drawn will be entitled to the Proclamation.

The Proclamation is in the proper handwriting of ABRAHAM LINCOLN, President of the United States of America, excepting two interlineations in pencil made by William H. Seward, Secretary of State, and the formal heading and ending of the document, which are in the handwriting of the Chief Clerk in the office of the Secretary of State. It is written on one side of four half sheets of foolscap paper, and can be seen and examined either in the Bazaar Builings, or in the Office of the Superintendent of the Insurance Department, in the State Hall, Albany.

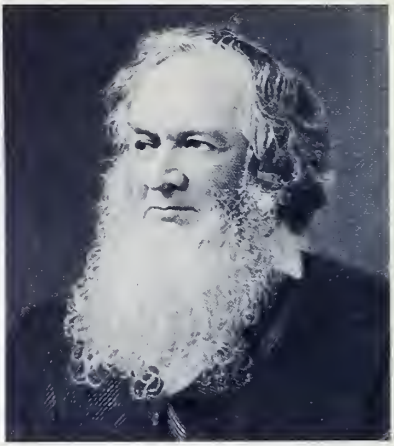
This Proclamation is, in the opinion of the Committee, an autographic and historic treasure of more interest and importance even, than the Proclamation of January 1st, 1863, which was only the necessary sequence of the September Proclamation.

Tickets can be obtained immediately by enclosing One Dollar for each Ticket, with name and residence, to WILLIAM BARNES, Chairman of the Committee, Albany, N. Y. If any of our friends in Great Britain wish to compete for this valuable document, a contribution of Four Shillings sterling will give one chance for it; and all sums realized for exchange over One Dollar per Ticket will, if desired, be given in shares to the British Museum. Mr. T. H. Barker, No. 41 John Dillon street, Manchester, is solicited to act for Great Britain.

WILLIAM BARNES,
EDWARD C. DELAVAN,
JOHN K. PORTER,
JAMES A. BELL,
GERRIT SMITH,
THOMAS W. OLCOTT,
WILLIAM C. BRYANT,
Special Committee.

P. S.—Please procure this circular to be published gratis in the various newspapers in your vicinity.

**This widely distributed circular announced details of raffle for Lincoln-donated document, an "autographic and historic treasure." Note that winner Gerrit Smith was committee member.**



While serving as first Superintendent of Insurance of the Stote of New York, Willioms Bornes (left) accepted choirmanship of Albany lottery committee for disposition of original droft of Emancipotion Proclomotion in Lincoln's handwriting. Winning ticket was held by Gerrit Smith, weolthy obolitionist of Peterboro, N. Y. For Smith's moving response, see bock cover.

a highly appropriate occasion for so worthy an activity. Governor Horatio Seymour in high-flown prose cited the illustrious history of Albany. Alfred B. Street, onetime State librarian and a poet of some renown, read a poem especially written for the occasion on the beauties of the scene. A capacity crowd cheered the speakers to the echo.

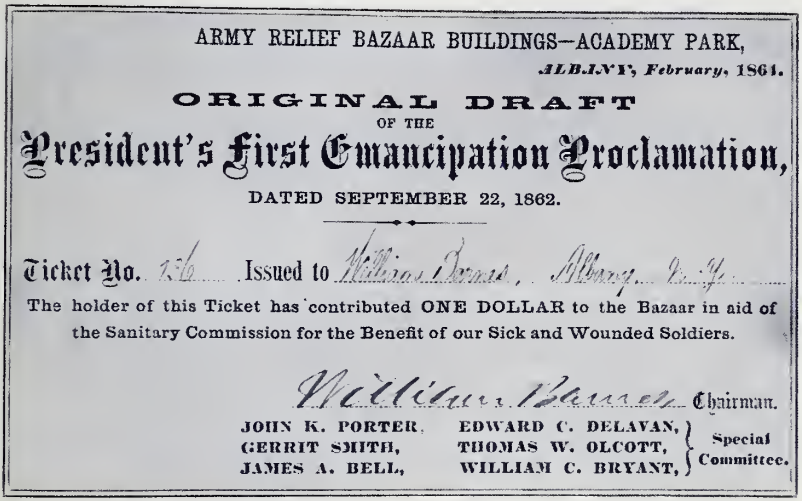
Not content with the intellectual and artistic contributions, the Bazaar also catered to the inner man. The bills of fare indicated a price scale which would wring tears from a modern restaurateur. Turkey, chicken, tongue, roast ham and roast beef were all available at the price of fifteen cents each. More plebeian fare — corned beef, pork and beans, and boiled ham were available for ten cents. The most expensive item was quail at thirty-eight cents, and highest priced dessert was a "Charlotte de Russe" at twenty cents. Oysters raw, stewed or pickled were available for a quarter. It is interesting to note that by the end of the Bazaar the price of turkey and chicken had been increased to twenty-five cents, but the other items avoided inflation and "held the line."

Once Albany got its teeth into a good thing, it refused to let go, and with bulldog determination held onto its fair for a week after the originally scheduled closing date, and even planned to cap it off with a grand ball on March 29. The ball was to be "cosmopolitan in character," and tickets admitting one gentleman and two ladies were offered at $5.00 — "Supper, etc., extra."

A remarkable variety of items was displayed and sold at the Bazaar. One of the most extensive collections was that exhibited by the New York State Bureau of Military Statistics. Ranging from battle flags to shell fragments, practically every military device used in the war was

represented. Revolutionary war relics, as well as those of the Civil War, were present. Available to interpret the collection to the viewer was Lieutenant Francis E. Brownell, formerly of the 11th Regiment, N. Y. Volunteers, who "promptly avenged the death of Col. Ellsworth at the Marshall House, Alexandria . . . " (See NEW YORK STATE AND THE CIVIL WAR June, 1962). A descriptive catalogue of the whole military show was available for sale in aid of the Bazaar. The catalogue was printed by Weed, Parsons and Co., Weed being the famous journalist, publisher of the *Albany Evening Journal,* and a staunch supporter of Abraham Lincoln. Similarly catalogued were "Rare and Valuable curiosities" in the Curiosity Shop. Loaned by prominent Albanians, these included Washington memorabilia, Napoleon's garden chair, all sorts of vases, objets d'art, and other items collected abroad, not the least of which were a "small glass leaf or shell from Munich, Bavaria, containing pebbles from the 'silverstrand' of Loch Katrine, mentioned in the 'Lady of the Lake' (Canto 1st, 17th Stanza), Moss from Dryburgh Abbey, on the banks of the Tweed where Sir Walter Scott is buried; and Heather flowers from the Trosach's Pass near Loch Katrine."

Stamp collectors can be brought to a high pitch of enthusiasm by the mention of Sanitary Fair stamps. These are now so rare as to be almost unattainable. Among the rarest is the Albany stamp, one of nine issued at the various fairs. It was engraved at the American Bank Note Company and was of ten-cent denomination, lithographed on thin white paper with rose colored design, which featured an eagle at rest. In proper condition these have been valued as high as $500 by collectors.


ARMY RELIEF BAZAAR BUILDINGS—ACADEMY PARK,

*ALBANY, February,* 1864.

ORIGINAL DRAFT

OF THE

President's First Emancipation Proclamation,

DATED SEPTEMBER 22, 1862.

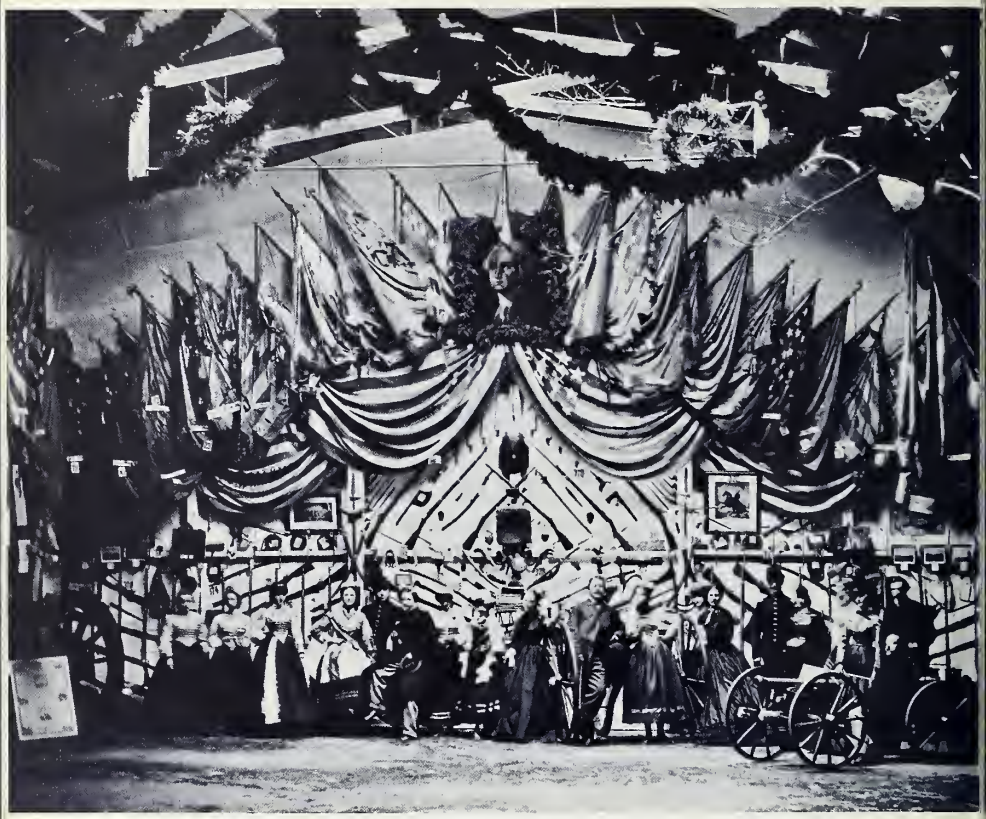
Ticket No. 256 Issued to William Barnes, Albany, N. Y.

The holder of this Ticket has contributed ONE DOLLAR to the Bazaar in aid of the Sanitary Commission for the Benefit of our Sick and Wounded Soldiers.

William Barnes Chairman.

JOHN K. PORTER, EDWARD C. DELAVAN, } Special
GERRIT SMITH, THOMAS W. OLCOTT, } Committee.
JAMES A. BELL, WILLIAM C. BRYANT, }

Lottery Chairman William Barnes believed in the cause; he "sold" this ticket to himself.



A halo of tattered national colors and regimental flags crowned this display of war relics at Albany Army Relief Bazaar in 1864. The war would go on, and there were to be many more shredded banners. In 1961, the State of New York began extensive flag restoration project.

A long list of autographs of famous persons was also noted as on display at the Bazaar. Prices were given each which seem to be relatively low. General officers, including Ulysses S. Grant, went for fifty cents, as did admirals. Stephen Douglas, Martin Van Buren and Samuel F. B. Morse were identically valued. Autograph letters including those from Abner Doubleday, father of the national pastime of baseball, Noah Webster, Louis Agassiz and John Jacob Astor were uniformly priced at $1. The *Albany Evening Journal* was able to report on March 10 that: "Mr. Benedict has been very successful in the sale of autographs. He has realized the handsome sum of $750, while returns are yet to be made which will swell the aggregate to at least $100 more."

Historically, the most important thing that happened was the lottery which started the original draft of the Emancipation Proclamation on

its way to the collections of the New York State Library. The advertisement reproduced on page 21 gives some indication of the way in which the lottery was conducted, and the contemporary opinion of this priceless document.

In response to the suggestion that British friends might wish to subscribe, Mr. T. H. Barker wrote Mr. E. C. Delavon from Manchester, England, on February 5 that " . . . I have no doubt but that I shall send next week for at least 100 and possibly 200 tickets. . . . If it should come here we would have a big Free Trade Hall meeting of 7000 people to exhibit and read it. . . . "

The actual drawing for this truly wondrous prize was held on Wednesday, March 9, closing date of the fair proper. The *Albany Evening Journal* was able to report: "The drawing for the President's Emancipation Proclamation took place last evening. Yesterday morning nearly a thousand tickets were unsold but the committee took off their coats and went at it with such a will that by 9 a.m. all but eight had been disposed of. There was a good deal of excitement as the drawing commenced and when the venerable Gerrit Smith was announced as the holder of the successful ticket, a loud and hearty cheer went up." Mr. Smith subsequently gave the document to the U. S. Sanitary Commission from whom the New York State Legislature purchased it for the collections of the State Library, after President Lincoln's funeral procession passed through Albany.

The fair closed on March 9, 1864, but with the tenacity noted above, Albanians kept it alive in divers ways. A grand auction was held on March 11, which brought the receipts reported on March 14 to $94,113, with a firm prediction that they would grow to at least $100,000. Albanians expressed some relatively faint praise of the Brooklyn fair which showed only $25,000 in profits. A grand promenade concert held on March 18, while an artistic success, was "not very largely attended" because of the bad weather. Perhaps because of this fact a rather sad notice appears in the *Evening Journal* of March 22: " . . . That the Ball announced for Tuesday evening 29th March, instant, not be given and that the money already received for tickets be refunded." The sole unfinished aspects of the Bazaar remained the claiming of prizes hitherto unclaimed, patiently listed in the public press, and a drawing for the "Palmer Marbles," the work of a distinguished Albany sculptor. The drawing was scheduled to be held on April 6 at a place with the unlikely name of Tweddle Hall (which, incidentally, also boasted a music store that might well have provided the necessary Dee Dee).

Thus a tremendous and highly successful community enterprise to aid the worthy Union soldier came to a close. As the *Canteen* put it: "The Bazaar has proved a most brilliant success. It has exceeded all expectations. . . . The unparalleled enthusiasm of the people was as unexpected as it is glorious and cheering. . . . This splendid success is due to the untiring efforts of all."

# LETTER OF GERRIT SMITH TO WILLIAM BARNES WHEN APPRAISED HE HAD WON LINCOLN DRAFT

PETERBORO, N. Y.
MARCH 12, 1864

*My Dear Sir:*

*I have your letter announcing the gratifying fact that I have drawn the precious prize.*

*I have never been proud of owning houses and lands. But I confess that I am somewhat elated by being the owner of this glorious Proclamation of Freedom, in the very form in which it came from our President's strong and honest hand.*

*Various suggestions respecting my disposition of the grand paper have already been made to me. But I feel bound to adhere to my purpose when I purchased the tickets. That purpose was to let it go to the individual or association, who would pay the largest price for it to the Sanitary Commission. As I believe the putting down of this infernal Rebellion to be our highest and holiest work, so I recognize no other claims upon my possessions to be as strong as that of the Soldiers, who are prosecuting this work. But the claim of the Sanitary Commission is the claim of the Soldiers — since it is the faithful and tender nurse of such of them as fall in the way from wounds or sickness.*

*You will please retain the Proclamation in your office until the purchaser shall call for it.*

*Your friend,*

GERRIT SMITH

# Mary Livermore and the Great Northwestern Fair

BY J. CHRISTOPHER SCHNELL

*She couldn't sign a contract, but she could and did lead the Midwest's effort to aid the Union army.*

IN THE EARLY SPRING OF 1863, a general mood of pessimism and gloom hovered over Chicago as the Civil War dragged on with no apparent end in sight. As she walked down Madison Street toward the offices of the Chicago Sanitary Commission, located beneath McVicker's Theatre, Mary Livermore felt a distinct sense of apprehension. Mrs. Livermore was associate director of the Commission, a civilian–volunteer organization that provided the army with nurses, hospital supplies, and other services necessary to maintain adequate sanitary conditions in Union camps. For several weeks, she had been expecting word from General Ulysses S. Grant's command in the western front.

And during those anxious weeks, the Chicago Sanitary Commission had daily sent one hundred barrels of supplies to Grant's shifting camp. One delegation, headed by Mrs. Livermore, was responsible for the transportation of thirty tons of medical supplies and food for the soldiers—rations of dried fruit, farina, and lemons—and even such delicacies as oysters and butter.

Upon entering the offices, Mrs. Livermore detected by the air of excitement that the long-awaited message had arrived. It was a letter from General Grant himself, dated March 4, and it contained an urgent call for more help. Dangerous problems, both of morale and sanitation, were jeopardizing the Union advance toward the garrisoned city of Vicksburg, Mississippi: "because the countryside was covered with water, troops could scarcely find ground on which to pitch their tents. Malarial fevers broke out among the men. Measles and small pox also attacked them." Nevertheless, Grant complimented the Sanitary Commission: "the hospital arrangements and medical attendance were so perfect, however, that the loss of life was much less than might have been expected."

Malaria, measles, smallpox! The Chicago Sanitary Commission sprang into a frenzy of action. It bought all the supplies available in the city and sent teams of men and women to scour the countryside in search of desperately needed commodities.

Before her work for the army brought her to national attention, Mary Livermore's life differed somewhat from that of other middle-class women. Born Mary Rice in Boston in 1820, she received possibly the finest education available to a young American girl. After completing the simple curriculum at the Female Seminary in Charlestown, Massachusetts, Mary taught French, Latin, and Italian and studied a wide variety of subjects under tutors hired by her father from Harvard University. In 1845, much to the dismay of her Calvinist family, she married a young Universalist minister, Daniel Parker Livermore, who in the following years served as pastor to congregations in several New England states.

During the late 1840s, the Livermores became involved in several reform movements of the time, including temperance and abolition. While living in Connecticut, they campaigned for the adoption of the Maine Liquor Law, a prohibitionist measure, and succeeded in securing its passage. Mary favored prohibition because she felt it was necessary to protect American women and their families from the "pauperism, crime, and moral deterioration" associated with alcoholism. Her first published work was a temperance story.

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J. Christopher Schnell was enabled to do the research underlying his article by a grant from the University Research Council at Southeast Missouri State University, where he is assistant professor of history.



1975

Chicago Historical Society

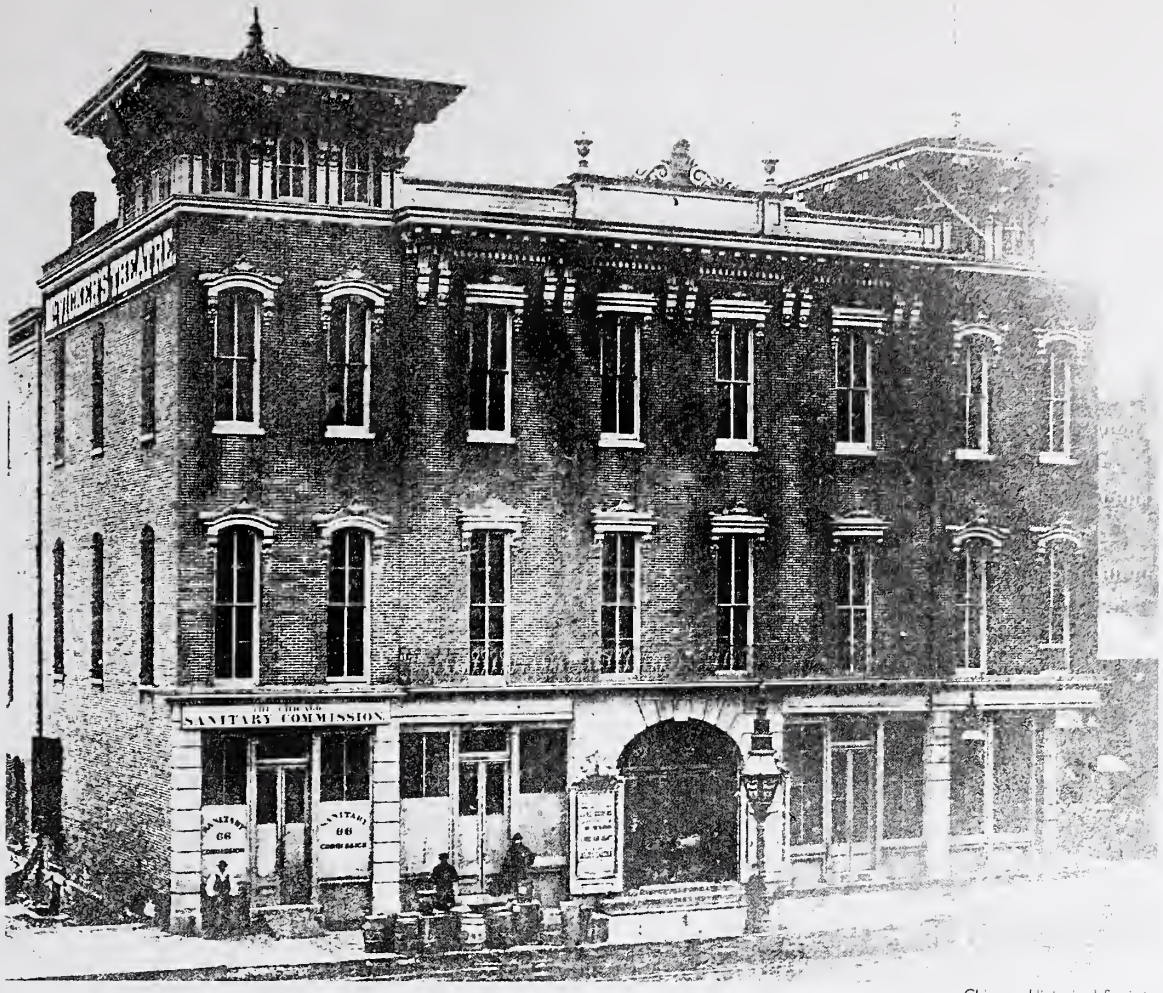
A broadside from the series "Heroes and Heroines of the War."

In 1857, the Livermores headed for Kansas, to assist in securing its status as a free state. However, one of their daughters became seriously ill in Chicago and, although Daniel Livermore continued the trip, Mary stayed behind to care for her child. When it became apparent that their daughter's illness would be lengthy, the Livermores decided to settle in Chicago. Here, Mary involved herself in a number of charitable causes, including administrative work for the Chicago Home of the Friendless. Later, she co-founded the Home for Aged Women and the Hospital for Women and Children. She also worked as associate editor of the *New Covenant*, a Universalist newspaper of which her husband was editor. In that capacity, she attended the 1860 Republican National Convention at the Wigwam in Chicago. As she noted later, "I was the only woman reporter present, and was furnished with a ticket, and assigned a place among the men reporters, numbering a hundred or two." She did other writing, also, and entered into various charitable enterprises.

When Lincoln's subsequent election prompted the secession of several Southern states and the Confederate army's attack on Fort Sumter, Mary was in Boston caring for her ailing father. There, as elsewhere throughout the North, local relief agencies were doing their part to help the fledgling Union army. From their localities, these societies sent bandages and packages from home to the regiments. The system was haphazard and chaotic, and it often resulted in lost supplies and worthless shipments of contaminated food; still, the need for this volunteer civilian aid became very evident to Mrs. Livermore when she made the long return journey to Chicago.

En route in May 1861, she saw Union troops crammed into dirty cattle cars. For lack of lodging, some were forced to sleep on the floors of railroad stations, while others were billeted in barns and stables. Dirty and unshaven, with insufficient food, many were already suffering from malnutrition, colds, and fevers. It was apparent to Mrs. Livermore that, during these early stages of the war, the Union army was more debilitated by the ineptness of the federal and state governments' logistics than by any damage inflicted by the Confederate army.

Letters sent home by soldiers on the front confirmed her suspicion. In June, a private from Camp Smith near Cairo, Illinois, wrote that "the




Chicago Historical Society
McVicker's Theatre, when it housed the Chicago Sanitary Commission.

government has done very little for us yet. . . . Many [men] are sick from exposure and lack of proper protection." His comrades badly needed beds, blankets, pillows, socks, and were living on "hardtack and salt junk." They were being "eaten up by mosquitoes and every kind of creeping thing." Another soldier at Camp Griffen, Virginia, reported that many men had died of pneumonia, dysentery, and exposure before they ever saw battle. He asserted that conditions in the army hospitals were "so bad the men fight against being sent to them. Many brave it out and die in camp."

It was to help remedy their soldiers' forlorn situation that citizens throughout the North had formed their aid societies and had sent relief supplies from their respective areas. On April 18, 1861, Chicagoans formed a similar organization and arranged for arms, equipment, and nurses to be sent to troops stationed at Cairo. Later that month, J. H. McVicker, the theater owner, donated several rooms to women who had volunteered to make bandages. But their efforts, while enthusiastic, were just as ineffective as similar efforts had proved to be in the East and, again, largely because they were so disorganized. A centralized agency was needed to coordinate military needs and civilian relief activity. For this purpose, President Lincoln authorized the establishment of the United States Sanitary Commission in June 1861, under the leadership of the Rev. Dr. Henry W. Bellows.

The Chicago branch of the Commission was formed in October 1861, following a citizens' meeting at the Tremont House. Shortly thereafter, Mary Livermore and Jane Hoge became its associate managers, entrusted with the responsibility of inspecting field camps, raising financial support, and organizing the solicitation, storage, and disbursement of supplies. The two women made an excellent team—Mrs. Livermore did most of the planning and administration; Mrs. Hoge, an able and respected open-air public orator, directed the public relations and promotional campaigns. Under their leadership, the Chicago Commission became a beehive of activity. Entering the offices, the visitor was greeted

by the roar attendant upon the loading of boxes and barrels, the hubbub of voices shouting and receiving orders, and the constant clatter of thirty to forty volunteer-operated sewing machines. The rooms exuded a myriad of odors: Mrs. Livermore referred to them as the "perfume of the Sanitary"—a mixture of onions, sauerkraut, whiskey, codfish, pickles, ale, potatoes, smoked salmon, and ginger.

Undertaking the organization and administration of Union supplies for most of the Western theater proved to be a monumental task. The Chicago Sanitary Commission was forced to hire a large number of corresponding secretaries to keep open the lines of communication between Chicago and the outlying areas which sent their supplies to the city for reshipment to the front lines. Supplies came from Iowa, Indiana, Michigan, and Wisconsin. To induce a steady flow of goods from these states, Mrs. Livermore and Mrs. Hoge wrote patriotic newsletters and "stimulating circulars, opened a vigorous correspondence with the aid societies within the bounds of the Commission and organized large numbers of new societies." The two leaders also paid many visits to battlefronts in southern Illinois and to the Tennessee–Mississippi theater to inspect supply depots and to ensure that the camps and hospitals did not exhaust their reserves of vital commodities.

These far-flung field trips offered Livermore and Hoge frequent opportunities to visit hospitals, raise money and supplies in surrounding towns, and organize many of the four thousand aid societies in the tributary region serving Chicago. In March 1863, following her receipt of General Grant's letter, Mrs. Livermore brought thirty-five hundred supply boxes down the Mississippi River; in the process, she visited nearly every Union hospital from Cairo to Young's Point, Mississippi, a short distance from the embattled city of Vicksburg. "From every point we were [able] to report our movements, the result of our observations, what we had accomplished and what we found needing attention, employing the Chicago press and the bulletins of the Sanitary Commission [to direct the flow of goods]." On this occasion, Mrs. Livermore shipped her cargo on riverboats and barges down the river from St. Louis, where Southern sentiment ran high. Most of the time, however, the Chicago Sanitary Commission depended on railroad transportation, particularly the Illinois Central, which moved all Commission freight without charge. A thousand barrels of food went southward daily, and it has been estimated that two-thirds of the U.S. Sanitary Commission's aid to Grant's army came from Chicago.

Despite the best efforts of the Commission and the federal government, troops in many areas remained neglected. During one of her journeys to the Mississippi front in 1863, Mrs. Livermore visited an officers' hospital in Memphis and reported that many soldiers were without food, clothing, or bedding. She found that "the government makes no provisions for the care of officers when they are sick, beyond furnishing medicines and advice. They receive their pay at such irregular intervals, that when the poor fellows are taken sick, they have no means to furnish them the necessary food and clothing their situation demands. . . . Their poverty is pitiable."

Jane Hoge.

Chicago Historical Society

To help allay such misery, the Chicago Sanitary Commission arranged for hospital cars to run between Nashville and the front during the campaign in Tennessee, and for a hospital directory at Louisville so that the families of wounded men could find them. During Grant's devastating Vicksburg campaign, the Commission designed and operated a supply depot in Young's Point, to serve troops fighting only a few miles away.

That spring's campaign, however, strained even the Chicago Commission's resources. Leaders recognized that the amount of money and materials that could be raised by canvassing would never meet the ever-increasing demands of General Grant's invading army. Therefore, in the summer of 1863, when Grant was laying siege to Vicksburg, Livermore and Hoge proposed a new and untested method of raising funds and supplies for the Union army—a great Northwestern fair. This fair was to be Mary Livermore's most notable accomplishment. The Great Northwestern Sanitary Fair, held in Chicago in the fall of 1863, was so successful that it became the prototype of many such fund-raising events.

After consulting with the male officers of the Commission, who hesitantly gave their approval, the women printed ten thousand circulars urging aid societies in outlying areas to assist in organizing the proposed festival. In the circular, Livermore and Hoge proposed numerous money-making projects designed to draw large crowds to the Fair. War souvenirs and mementos, such as captured Confederate flags and weapons, were to be sold to the highest bidder. A series of dinners for those who attended, prepared and served by volunteers—with poultry, livestock, eggs, and other agricultural products donated by the local farmers— would realize handsome profits. In the evening, visitors would be entertained by a variety series of "the most brilliant character," including concerts, tableaux, pantomimes, and lectures. The circular, which the Commission mailed to most newspapers in the five-state region, requested every local aid society and member of the Union League and Lodge of Good Templars "to represent itself in a Convention to be held September 1st, by at least one lady delegate from its members." Nearly five hundred delegates attended the "Women's Convention."

During that convention, held in Chicago on September 1 and 2, 1863, the women of the Commission planned and organized the Fair. By acclamation, the delegates appointed Mrs. Livermore and Mrs. Hoge co-directors of the gala event. Shortly after the convention adjourned, the women announced their wide-ranging program and dispatched a second circular to auxiliaries throughout the surrounding region:

> Every Aid Society, Union League, and Good Templar's Lodge in the Northwest, is requested to appoint a Committee, IMMEDIATELY, to canvass its neighborhood, and secure laborers for this great work. Clergymen of all denominations, are urgently requested to interest their parishes in this great enterprise, and stimulate their ladies to the manufacture and donation of articles for the Fair.

Every town was urged to hold local fair meetings shortly before the Chicago event in order to bring as large a collection of articles as possible to the Great Northwestern Fair, scheduled to open on October 27.

Because their idea was experimental, Livermore and Hoge had few guidelines to follow. As time began to run out, they urged a massive effort by the thousands of volunteers in the northwestern region. Throughout September and October, women organized hundreds of fair meetings in the cities and towns located in the wide circumference surrounding Chicago. They canvassed their communities for gifts—money, promises of a percentage of the yearly harvest yield, almost anything. Donations arrived from cities as far away as Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, New York, and Boston.

Up to about a week before the Fair was to open, the entire operation was basically a women's movement. From Mary Livermore and Jane Hoge down through the ranks of several thousand volunteers, it was planned, coordinated, and executed almost completely by women while

Chicago Historical Society

Wagons usually contained chloroform, surgeon's silk, condensed milk, and beef stock, among other things. A government agent rode with the wagon, which flew the Sanitary Commission flag.

men watched, sometimes with skepticism, as the opening date approached. Then, as Mary Livermore later noted, "at last, even gentlemen became inoculated with the 'Fair Mania.' " It was already mid-October, very late, but the men really pitched in, volunteering their help, pledging their money and merchandise through the newspapers, and "favoring the ladies with their suggestions." During this final hectic period, the manufactured goods contributed by Chicagoans included mowing machines, reapers, threshers, planters' pumps, and windmills, to be sold at auction. In fact, so many citizens offered agricultural implements that Livermore and Hoge had to order the construction of a new hall solely for the storage of machines.

During the final week before opening day, thousands of shipments of donated goods poured into Chicago. Farmers filled the back rooms of the Commission with wheat and the basement of McVicker's Theatre with vegetables. Lake County farmers jammed the sidewalks along Madison Street with row upon row of crops. Stacks of boxes and barrels, and sacks of wheat, corn, beans, onions, and potatoes lined the street as Chicago prepared for its greatest fair ever. But the Fair's most valuable possession was not related to the crops, the machines, the fancy needlework, or the clothing. It was the original copy of the Emancipation Proclamation, presented by President Abraham Lincoln.

The gift was a result of a special trip to Washington by Lincoln's close friend, Thomas B. Bryan, president of the Northwestern Sanitary Fair Commission. After agreeing to part with the valuable document, President Lincoln expressed some regret at having to lose it. Lincoln informed his friend that he had "wanted to keep that proclamation to give to my sons as a family keepsake, but my soldier boys are dearer to me than anything else in the world, and they shall have it!" Later, Bryan stated that tears came into the President's eyes as he spoke of the matter. On October 26, Lincoln wrote Mrs. Livermore and Mrs. Hoge the following letter:

> According to the request made in your behalf, the original draft of the Emancipation proclamation is herewith inclosed. The formal words at the top, and the conclusion, except the signature, you perceive are not in my hand-writing. They were written at the State Department by whom I know not. The printed part was cut from a copy of the preliminary proclamation, and pasted on merely to save writing.
>
> I had some desire to retain the paper; but if it shall contribute to the relief or comfort of the soldiers, that will be better.
>
> Your obt. Servt.
>
> A. Lincoln

At the Fair, the letter and document were auctioned off to the highest bidder. They were acquired for $10,000 by a citizen who sold them to Thomas Bryan for $3,000. Unfortunately, the Emancipation Proclamation perished when the Great Fire of 1871 destroyed the library of the Chicago Historical Society.

When the Fair opened its doors on October 27, the entire city of Chicago suspended its daily routine. All its businesses, courts, stores, shops, factories, schools, even the Board of Trade closed

Executive Mansion,

Washington, Oct. 26, 1863

Ladies having in charge
The North-Western Fair
For the Sanitary Commission
Chicago, Illinois.

According to the request made in your behalf, the original draft of the Emancipation proclamation is herewith inclosed. The formal words at the top, and the conclusion, except the signature, you perceive are not in my hand-writing. They were written at the State Department by whom I know not. The printed part was cut from a copy of the preliminary proclamation, and pasted on merely to save writing.

I had some desire to retain the paper; but if it shall contribute to the relief or comfort of the soldiers, that will be better.

Every genuine copy has the Proclamation seal attached immediately hereunder

Your Obt. Servt.
A. Lincoln

Chicago Historical Society

A facsimile of the letter from Abraham Lincoln to the "Ladies having in charge The North Western Fair," to which he appended the Emancipation Proclamation, to be auctioned off in the Union cause.

for the day as an air of excitement swept the city. It was, in the words of the Chicago *Tribune*:

> . . . a sight never before seen in the West on any occasion, and we doubt whether a more magnificent spectacle was ever presented in the streets of the Empire City itself, than the vast procession of chariots and horsemen, country wagons and vehicles, civic orders and military companies, both horses and foot, which converted Chicago, for the time, into a vast theatre of wonders. From the earliest dawn of the day, the heart of the mighty city was awake, and long before eight o'clock, the streets were thronged with people. Citizens hurried excitedly to and fro, and country women, with their children, came in early in the morning, with colors tied to their bridles, and miniature flags tied to their horses' heads. From house tops, from the tops of public buildings, was displayed the glorious flag of liberty. Drums beat in all parts of the city, summoning the various processions or accompanying them to the great central rendezvous. Bands of music, playing patriotic tunes—bands of young men and women, singing patriotic songs—enlivened the streets.

For the next two weeks, the atmosphere was charged with a nationalistic enthusiasm which rarely waned. Each day, the trains were filled with farmers and people from the small towns who were eager to display their loyalty to the North. The center of the activity was the mammoth Bryan Hall—later known as the Grand Opera House—located across Clark Street from the courthouse between Randolph and Washington streets. Crowds packed the place from eight in the morning until ten at night. Inside, the building had been divided into various arenas for the different activities. The hall was mainly used to exhibit fancy goods, needlework, musical instruments, silverware, glassware, and clothing. Downstairs, a huge dining room with a seating capacity of fifteen hundred had been created. Manufacturer's Hall, constructed especially for the Fair, housed a display of the latest in farm wagons, reapers, fanning mills, threshing machines, corn planters, steam engines, and plows. Across Clark Street, in the courthouse, Mary Livermore organized the Supervisors' Room as a showcase for captured Confederate flags, Union flags, trophies, and other war mementos. The women organized an art gallery in McVicker's Theatre, under the direction of the Chicago sculptor L. W. Volk. Finally, Metropolitan Hall became the nightly scene of various forms of entertainment from singing groups to bands of all sizes. Its star attraction quickly emerged in the soul-stirring lectures of Anna Dickinson.

Later hailed as the greatest woman orator in America, Anna Dickinson at the time of her Chicago visit was beginning a long and tempestuous career. Mrs. Livermore described her as a "young girl of not more than twenty summers, graceful, beautiful, and bewitching, holding an immense audience spellbound by her eloquence,

Chicago Historical Society

*Statement of Shipments of Hospital Stores by Chicago Sanitary Commission, from 1st February to 1st July, 1862.*

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Comforts and Quilts | 3332 | Farina | 3188 lbs. |
| Shirts | 13086 | Starch | 52 lbs. |
| Sheets | 7995 | Sago | 849 lbs. |
| Under Shirts | 909 | Arrow Root | 1700 lbs. |
| Drawers | 4467 | Tapioca | 925 lbs. |
| Pillows | 8115 | Batting | 2 bales |
| Pillow Cases | 11033 | Barley | 2815 lbs. |
| Pads and Cushions | 2554 | Butter | 22 kegs. |
| Socks | 4678 pairs. | " | 207 lbs. |
| Bed Sacks | 2893 | " | 1 crock |
| Towels and Napkins | 9109 | Eggs | 15 bbls. |
| Dressing Gowns | 1369 | Lemons | 40 boxes |
| Handkercheifs | 3386 | " | 12 doz. |
| Bottles of Wine | 1179 | Oranges | 10 boxes |
| Slippers | 744 pairs. | Oysters | 654 cans. |
| Jellies and Preserves in cans and jars | 1504 | C. S. Soap | 125 lbs. |
| Blankets | 213 | Pickles | 24 jars. |
| Mittens | 455 pairs. | " | 2 bbls. |
| Porter | 844 dozen. | Prunes | 11 boxes |
| Ale | 1 bbl. | Tamarinds | 2 boxes |
| Codfish | 10440 lbs. | " | 1 kegs. |
| Nutmegs | 25 lbs. | Urinals | 105 |
| Ground Cinnamon | 40 lbs. | Adhesive Plaster | 600 yds. |
| " | 1 can. | Sponges | 85 lbs. |
| Ground Cloves | 47 lbs. | Cocoa | 5 pap'rs |
| Cranberries | 1 bbl. | Tomatoes | 74 cans. |
| Chloroform | 90 lbs. | Tin Cups | 1693 |
| Ground Flax Seed | 300 lbs. | Tin Plates | 6 doz. |
| Tea | 29 cad's. | Bed Pans | 48 |
| Tea | 3 chests | Graters | 12 doz. |
| Tea | 37 lbs. | Brandy | 233 bottles |
| Sugar | 5 bbls. | Surgeons' Silk | ¼ lb. |
| " | 1 keg. | Splints | 2 boxes |
| " | 30 lbs. | Wash Basins | 74 |
| Candles | 7 boxes. | Candlesticks | 7 doz. |
| " | 20 lbs. | Spoons | 12 doz. |
| Rice | 8 bbls. | Cots | 126 |
| " | 1 keg. | Isinglass | 277 yds. |
| " | 24 lbs. | Soldified Milk | 22 cans. |
| Ground Pepper | 4 boxes. | " | 248 lbs. |
| Chloride Lime | 7 bbls. | Potatoes | 2 bbls. |
| Camphor Bottles | 12 | Onions | 1 bbl. |
| Dried Fruit | 1250 cans. | Carrots | 1 bbl. |
| Dried Apples and Peach's | 3354 lbs. | Alcolol | 5 galls. |
| Mustard | 103 lbs. | " | 20 bottl's |
| " | 18 boxes. | Spittoons | 26 |
| " | 1 keg. | Knives and Forks | 42 doz. |
| | | Concentrated Coffee | 72 cans. |

Chicago Historical Society
The spellbinding oratory of Anna Dickinson brought large crowds to the Fair and netted it over $1,300.

now melting them to tears and sobs by the infinite pathos of her voice, and of her pleadings—and now dilating with noble indignation, and uttering scorching denunciations of the vile enemies of the country, whether fighting against our armies in the South, or more meanly plotting treason at home."

Miss Dickinson's arrival in Chicago was a major news event. She appeared at the Fair every night for two weeks. Although tickets for her lectures sold at a dollar each—a higher price than any other attraction—she always spoke to capacity crowds, and even standing-room tickets were sold out in advance. After the Commission had paid all the expenses related to Miss Dickinson's lectures, including her fee, the rent of the hall, advertising, and so forth, Mrs. Livermore reported that the dynamic orator had netted more than $1,300 for the Fair.

On the final day, the Sanitary Commission gave a huge banquet for all wounded soldiers in Chicago hospitals. At noon, the doors swung open and, as the band struck up "Brave Boys Are They," the wounded marched into the hall. Mrs. Livermore later described them as "a bronzed, scarred, emaciated, halt, blind, deaf, crippled, skeleton corps, some without arms, some without legs, some swinging themselves painfully on crutches, and some leaning feebly on those stronger than themselves." Then, when all had been seated, Anna Dickinson rose and gave the closing address:

> Some of you, alas! have come back to us blinded, with the beautiful light of heaven shut out from you forever, but it has been that the glorious light of justice might shine throughout the length and breadth of the land. What can I say to you, save that coming back to us halt, and maimed, and blind, the great loyal heart of the nation springs up to meet you, and to love you. Some of you may be going back again to renew your noble exertions in our great cause, to suffer, and, it may be, to die for it. If there be any such here, looking in your faces, I repeat, we thank you. Should it be the lot of any of you to return to us no more—should your life ebb on some distant battle-field, where no woman's hand can smooth your dying pillow, and no friendly ear perceive your parting sigh—still even there our love and affection shall follow you. You shall have immortal crownings and the world shall honor your graves!

By any standards, the fair was a remarkable accomplishment. Mrs. Livermore had predicted that it would be financially rewarding if profits reached $25,000, and it actually netted more than $86,000. Ticket takers at Bryan Hall estimated that between eighty-five and ninety thousand visitors entered the main building. More importantly, Chicago's Fair set a precedent for similar fund-raising events in New York, Philadelphia, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, and St. Louis. Had it failed, the United States Sanitary Commission would have been in serious trouble, and the Union army would undoubtedly have suffered. The Commission had been running out of money—between April 1 and October 1, 1863, it had received $115,752 but spent $281,099, creating a deficit of $165,347.

It is probable that the United States Sanitary Commission would eventually have found other ways to raise money for the Union army, but the sanitary fairs undeniably helped to insure a steady flow of supplies to the battlefront. Grateful Chicagoans concluded their fair by passing a final resolution thanking Mrs. Livermore and Mrs. Hoge for "their untiring zeal, industry and effort, [having] inaugurated, conducted and concluded the great Northwestern Fair [despite] . . . having been subjected to many personal trials and difficulties in the prosecution of their noble work."

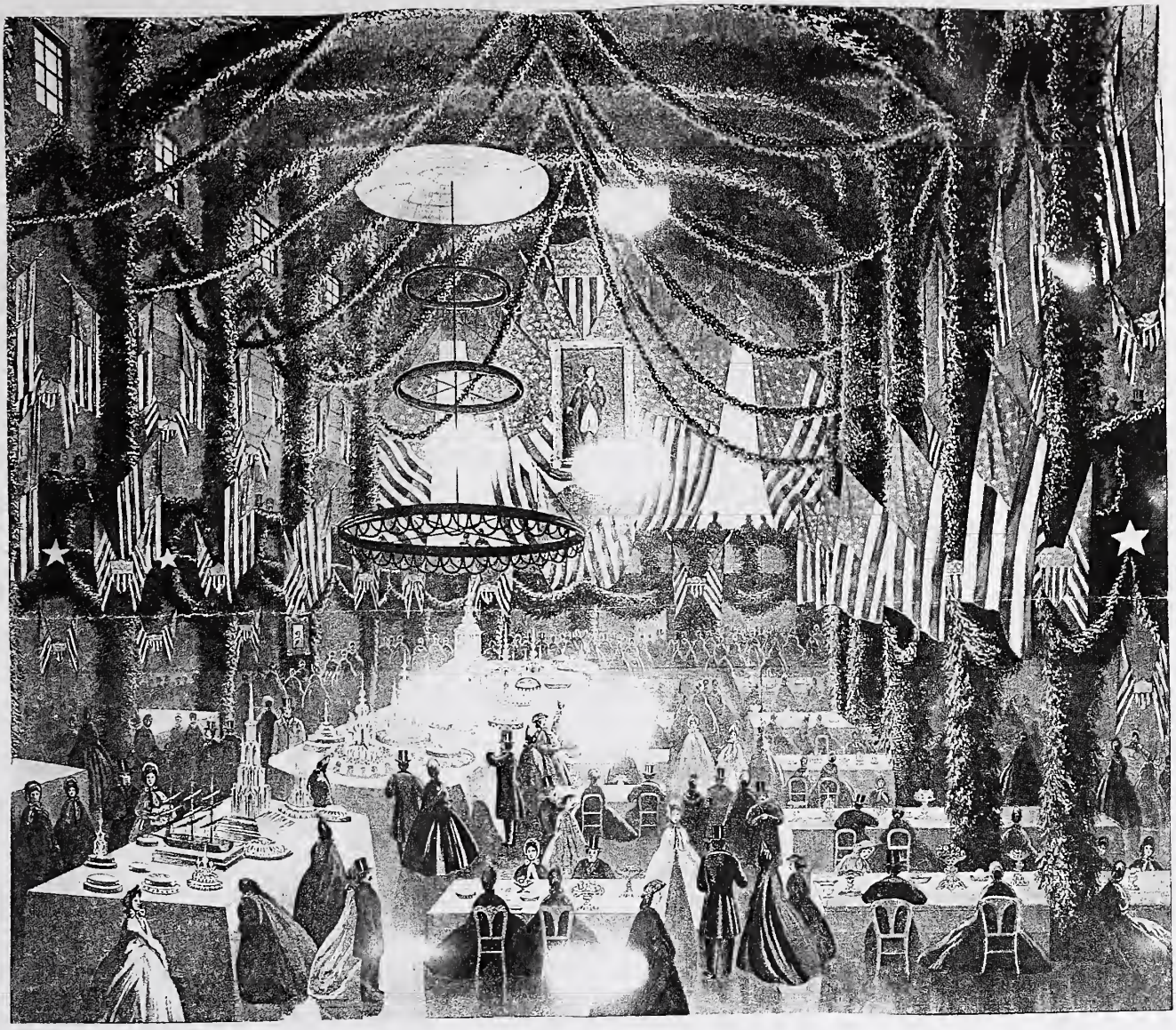
After the Civil War, Mary Livermore turned her attention to the woman's movement. During her preparation for the Northwestern Sanitary Fair, she had encountered legal discrimination against married women a number of times. When she and Mrs. Hoge attempted to arrange for the construction of Manufacturer's Hall, for example, the builder informed them that their husbands' signatures would have to appear on the building contract because married women could not enter a contractual agreement without the permission of their spouses. Later, Mrs. Livermore remarked that this incident stimulated her later efforts to sponsor legislation aimed at securing property and civil rights for married women in Illinois.

Mary Livermore.
Chicago Historical Society

This work soon led her to the woman's suffrage movement. Earlier, she had not been in favor of suffrage, but now she became convinced that the disenfranchisement of women placed them on the same level as "the pauper, the convict, the idiot, and the lunatic." She organized the first suffrage convention in Chicago, in 1868—a huge success, with a roster of speakers that included such prominent Chicagoans as Judge James Bradwell and the Rev. Dr. Edward Beecher, and national figures such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony. Shortly after, Mrs. Livermore became president of the Illinois Woman Suffrage Association.

In 1869, she established Chicago's first woman suffrage and temperance organ, *The Agitator*. The following year it merged with Lucy Stone's *Woman's Journal,* and Mrs. Livermore moved to Boston to become editor in chief. During the final twenty-five years of her life, Mrs. Livermore wrote and lectured extensively throughout the United States, becoming one of the better known literary representatives of the woman's movement. Although she tended toward conservatism, she proved to be more successful than many other feminists when it came to convincing her audiences. Probably her most frequent topic was a plea for higher education for women, which she dealt with in a lecture called "What Shall We Do with Our Daughters?" She wrote two autobiographical books and compiled a volume of biographies of women.

Throughout this period her reputation grew. When she died in 1905, at the age of 85, the Boston *Transcript* called her the "foremost woman in America." In retrospect, this characterization might be open to some discussion, but without a doubt Mary Livermore was one of Chicago's most illustrious citizens.



#2907- Knickerbocker Hall, Brooklyn Sanitary Fair.
(Color transparencies only) (1864)

Sanitary Commission records

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.
DOWJONES
FRIDAY, JUNE 22, 2007 - VOL. CCXLIX NO. 145

# Civil War Letters Shed Light on Pain Of Troop's Families

* * *

## Without Word From Kin, Parents Turned to Agency; Son's Death at Bull Run

By IANTHE JEANNE DUGAN

When her father's letters stopped coming, six months after he went off to war, Emily Tyrrell fell into a state of "anxious suffering." All she had was a rumor: Somewhere, he was hospitalized and gravely ill.

So Miss Tyrrell wrote to a humanitarian agency known for finding missing Union soldiers—the U.S. Sanitary Commission. "Whatever his sad fate may have been," the seamstress from upstate New York wrote, "our torturing suspense may soon be relieved."

A grim response came quickly. Her father, Ira M. Tyrrell, had died in City Point, Va.—in late June, 1864. The 49-year-old father of nine was among about 620,000 fatalities on both sides in the American Civil War.

Miss Tyrrell's letter sat untouched for 143 years, until a Fort Wayne, Ind., accountant named Brian Tyrrell recently ordered a copy from the New York Public Library. He had Googled his great-great-grandfather Ira Tyrrell, and, to his amazement, stumbled on his name in a new online database.

"It's another piece of the puzzle," says Mr. Tyrrell, 57. He believes, based on his research, that Ira Tyrrell was accidentally buried under the name "J. Aurell" in City Point, presumably after an engraver misread someone's handwriting. He plans to use the letter to try to correct the tombstone.

The letter is one of thousands sitting at the library, in a largely unexplored trove that sheds new light on the Civil War. After the war ended, the Sanitary Commission, a forerunner to the Red Cross, gave all its records—tens of thousands of letters, logs and photos—to the Astor Library, a precursor to the New York Public Library.

But the library only recently began preparing the archives for public use, bringing forth a haunting chorus of despair. "My wife has given way under the burden of grief and is now in a most critical condition," wrote Thomas York of Allegheny, Pa., seeking his 13-year-old son, who apparently had run off to the war. Another father was so desperate to find his son, Charles O. Eastman, that he wrote a letter with a pencil held between his

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*Continued from Page One*

teeth. The father had lost his hands in an accident.

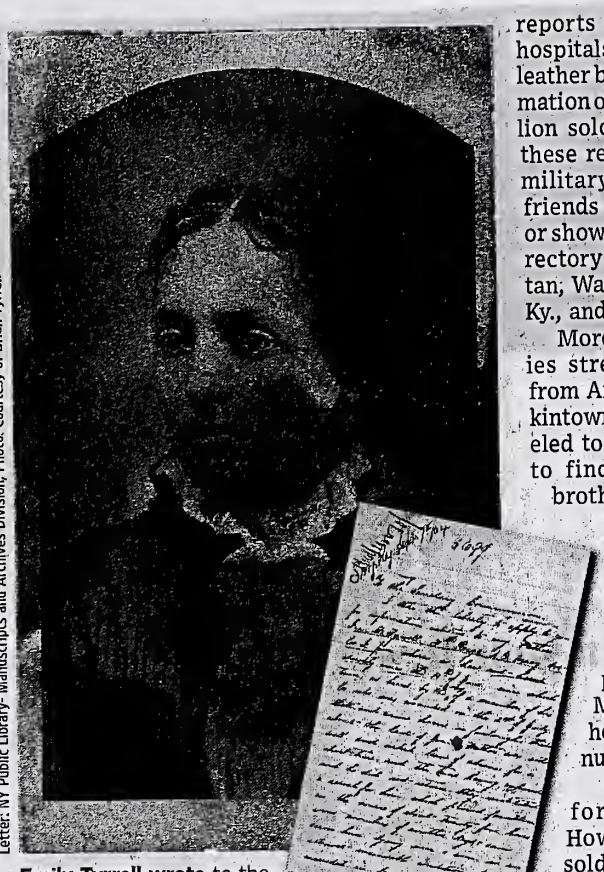
The documents suggest how an absence of information about soldiers compounded the suffering back home. In the Iraq war, the U.S. government generally is quick to identify wounded soldiers and contact kin. In the Civil War, families ran ads and offered rewards for information on loved ones. The Sanitary Commission set out to help.

"The papers are an invaluable source about how voluntary agencies stepped in to bury the dead and provide information to families before the U.S. government recognized this as its responsibility," Harvard University President Drew Gilpin Faust said in an email. She is among a handful of scholars aware of the documents, which she came across while researching her forthcoming book, "This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War."

## Flood of Letters

The Sanitary Commission was formed in 1861 as a charitable agency providing aid to soldiers. Its first executive secretary was Frederick Law Olmsted, the famed landscape architect who designed New York's Central Park. Following the disastrous first battle of Bull Run in Virginia, he interviewed soldiers and found out they were too fatigued and hungry to fight properly. The organization dispatched nurses and doctors, ran kitchens and made uniforms. Donations flooded in—some $4 million worth, according to commission records.

So did letters. "The boy's mother and I are worn with anxiety," wrote Aurelius Bowen, a surgeon in Nebraska. He offered $100 "for every necessary hour" spent by a Sanitary Commission clerk to find his 18-year-old son, Marcellus. In the margin, he described the streets of Nebraska City after President Lincoln's assassination. "Strong men broke down and cried like children," he wrote. The Sanitary Commission tracked down Mr. Bowen's son, and wrote back that he was safely with his camp. (The boy later died of tuberculosis, records show, while the surgeon became a state senator.)



Letter: NY Public Library- Manuscripts and Archives Division; Photo: Courtesy of Brian Tyrrell

**Emily Tyrrell wrote** to the Sanitary Commission in 1864, 'as a last resort' to find her father.

In 1862, the agency set up a separate operation to handle the growing stream of letters—the Hospital Directory. It was run by John Bowne, an accountant at his grandfather's New York printing company, Bowne & Co. The Hospital Directory received daily reports from hundreds of hospitals and in big, brown leather books recorded information on more than one million soldiers. It referred to these records and wrote to military surgeons when friends and families wrote or showed up at Hospital Directory offices in Manhattan, Washington, Louisville, Ky., and Philadelphia.

More than 9,000 inquiries streamed in. One was from Annie Mecann of Jenkintown, Pa., who had traveled to Newport News, Va., to find a witness to her brother's last days. "But the hospital and all connected with it had been removed from there," she wrote to Mr. Olmsted. Mr. Bowne promptly put Ms. Mecann in touch with her brother's deathbed nurse.

Mr. Bowne also comforted Cornelius Howard, a hospitalized soldier who feared the sister he left in a Manhattan orphanage was dead. Mr. Bowne contacted the orphanage and replied that the girl was "in good health."

Some fates remained a mystery. "John Robinson was last seen in a saloon in Detroit," one surgeon responded.

A few years ago, with a $250,000 matching federal grant, the library began preserving the Hospital Directory inquiries. With the help of a humidifier, the staff began gingerly opening letters, many wrapped in brown paper, and tied with faded red string. Susan Waide, an archivist overseeing the project, typed the names of everyone who was inquired about into a database and put it online.

## Seeking Funds

Now, the library is seeking $3 million in federal funding to "liberate the entire collection," says library president Paul LeClerc, and create an online Civil War correspondence center. The massive collection sits in locked stacks at the library's century-old landmark in midtown Manhattan.

One day recently, Ms. Waide pulled a large brown leather binder off a shelf—a death report. Inside, were long lists of names and cause of death: "Typhoid...gunshot wounds... diarrhea...amputation." Other boxes contained photos of sanitary workers in action. The Hospital Directory inquiries now sit in manila folders, labeled with soldiers' names.

Among the names is Robert B. Wallace, "an only son," who enlisted right after college. "It is the last effort of a mother's affectionate love to relieve a breaking heart," said a letter written on behalf of Lottie E. Wallace of Manhattan. She wanted index cards describing him to be placed at Washington-area hospitals, to "catch the eye of someone who was present with our boy when he died, if dead he is, or who has been with him if he is living and a prisoner of the enemy."

Mr. Bowne replied with tragic news. On Aug. 30, 1862, Mr. Wallace was shot in the right side of his abdomen during the Second Battle of Bull Run.

"Our forces were in full retreat," a surgeon reported. "He could not be removed."

**WSJ.COM**

**ONLINE TODAY:** See images of Civil War-era letters, at **WSJ.com/OnlineToday**.